

Companion Animal Newsletter - January 2018

DENTAL HYGIENE IN CATS

Our domestic moggies are still able to hunt and consume their prey much like their big cat cousins. The little bundles of fun are born with 26 needle like teeth and as they grow older a few more are thrown in, increasing to a total of 30 teeth! Unlike their larger relatives, dental care in domestic cats is a common problem in general veterinary practice. 85% of cats (and dogs) older than 3 years may have signs of periodontal disease.

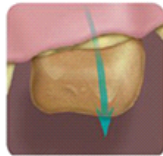
A problem we see frequently at the clinic is cats presenting with redness of the gums, this is known as gingivitis, affecting the gingiva or 'gum'. It can be graded depending on the severity and is commonly accompanied with bad breath or 'halitosis'. A chronic form is usually diagnosed in cats over 6 years old and can cause severe pain, often needing immediate treatment. This condition is known as Feline Chronic Gingivostomatitis (FCGS). Some younger cats can be diagnosed with this condition and this can lead to complete dental extraction if not resolved with medical treatment.

Feline Calicivirus (FCV) is known to be associated with dental disease. The virus can cause ulceration of the hard and soft palates, tongue and cheeks and this can also become chronic, with many cats often needing hospitalisation for pain and inappetence.

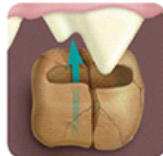
Diet can also influence your cat's dental hygiene. Wet diets can sometimes cause an accumulation of tartar due to food sticking to and lingering on the teeth, which in turn can lead to the tooth decaying and eventually falling out or needing a dental extraction. Some dry foods have also been shown to have this effect, so food companies have developed special diets just for oral health!



Works like a toothbrush to clean teeth and freshen breath as pets chew.



Patented fibre alignment helps kibble stay in contact with the tooth surface.

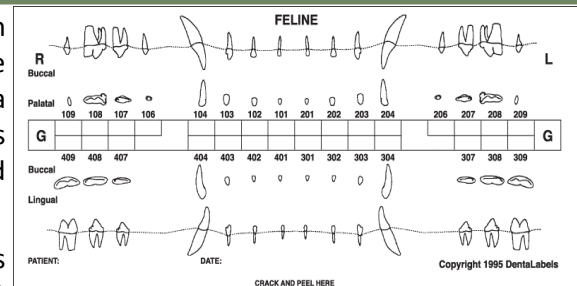


Gently scrubs away bacteria laden plaque for better oral and overall health.

Hills Veterinary Prescription foods have produced a diet called t/d. This is specially formulated and shaped to clean the tooth's surface, rid it of bacteria laden tartar, and can be fed for the cat's life time. This diet is readily available and if you are interested in trying it ask to speak to one of the veterinary nurses for advice how best to feed this diet.

Other methods of keeping your feline friend's teeth clean is by regularly brushing them. There are various types of toothpastes and brushes available formulated with enzymes to help the breakdown of tartar and reduce the need for dental procedures. The International Society of Feline Medicine has information and demonstrations on how to effectively brush your cat's teeth at <https://icatcare.org/advice/how-brush-your-cats-teeth> or why not book an appointment with one of our veterinary nurses who can demonstrate this also.

As a veterinary practice we perform all types of dental procedures each week, from a simple scale and polish to complex dental operations, but patients always go home feeling more comfortable in the long run. For more advice please do not hesitate to contact the surgery.



MANAGEMENT OF THE ELDERLY CAT

As cats age, there are a number of illnesses that become increasingly common, many of which are chronic and need long term management at home. This can be disruptive for elderly cats because they often follow very set routines and they dislike any upset to their normal daily routine, such as regular oral medication or trips to the veterinary clinic for ongoing monitoring of their condition. Nursing care is vital whenever a cat is unwell, regardless of it's age or whether that care takes place in a clinical setting or at home. Elderly cats, however, are especially vulnerable patients, so calm and sympathetic handling is of great benefit.

Dramatic changes to the environment or routines can cause stress and have a negative impact on overall health and wellbeing. Therefore, if changes cannot be avoided, they should be made gradually. Routine should be maintained as much as possible – procedures such as regular feeding, medication and care regimes – while still ensuring that the cat has plenty of time to rest and sleep.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the cat is comfortable and pain free. It may be beneficial to dedicate a quiet, private area where the cat will feel secure. All of the cats' resources – food, water, litter tray, sleeping area – should be positioned apart from each other but within easy access. This area should be kept at a constant and comfortable temperature, free from draughts, and the cat given options for sleeping areas including a heated, soft bed.

For those cats requiring medication, it is vital to establish a calm and stress-free routine. A step-by-step guide to giving a cat a pill can be found on the website of the welfare charity, International Cat Care, <https://icatcare.org/advice/how-give-your-cat-tablet> and our vets and nurses can also demonstrate this for you. Be aware that elderly cats may be suffering from arthritis in the neck or shoulders which can make raising the head and opening the mouth painful. Restraint should be minimal whilst speaking in a calm, soft voice. Offering food or a small amount of water post pill can prevent the tablet or capsule from irritating the oesophagus. It may be a daunting experience and can take time to get used to the treatments for your cat but we are here to help you with and offer advise.

Some conditions may benefit from specific nutrition and a change in diet might be an option. Any change in diet should be gradual with the amount of 'old food' decreased while the new food is increased over a couple of weeks. This means as little as a teaspoonful is introduced to the old food every day. If you are finding it difficult to encourage your cat to eat, you may find the following tips useful:

- Offer food little and often, served at room temperature, in a quiet location away from the litter tray and water.
- Food should be easy to access at all times, possibly requiring multiple feeding areas.
- Use wide, shallow bowls, raised off the ground for cats with arthritis in their necks or elbows.
- Some elderly cats prefer soft food.
- Avoid leaving uneaten wet food out for more than a couple of hours.
- Hand feed small amounts of food.
- Sprinkle cat nip onto food.
- Smear a small amount of food onto the cat's paw or around the mouth.
- Avoid offering a range of different foods at one time because this can be overwhelming and off-putting.
- Tempting treats can be helpful in triggering an interest in food – such as cooked chicken or fish.
- Water intake can be encouraged by adding water to food or using drinking fountains.
- Older cats with chronic conditions can often suffer with an unkempt or matted coat owing to their inability to groom all areas effectively. Gentle grooming with a soft brush or rubber mitt can help maintain your cats coat and reduce the amount of ingested fur. Your cat may also appreciate its eyes and mouth being cleaned with cotton wool balls soaked in warm water.

Considerations for an elderly cat with mobility issues, signs of arthritis and stiffness can be alleviated by:

- Providing steps up to a favourite sleeping place.
- Allowing easy access to an indoor litter tray (using a catflap to go outside may be painful)
- Low sided litter trays that are easy to climb in and out of.
- Soft, sand-like litter can often be more comfortable to stand on.
- Food, water and litter trays are all within easy access- for example, all on the same floor where the cat spends most of its time.
- Draught free sleeping places with soft, warm bedding.



- Igloo beds can be very popular because they are cosy and easy to climb in and out of.
- Washable, thermal bedding.
- Regular checks with your vet and nurse to check for signs of claw overgrowth, weight reduction and mobility issues.



As cats age and chronic diseases can develop, we think it is essential for us to play an important role with our clients in home management and care, not only to prevent pain and suffering but to help promote good quality of life in their pets later years.

We offer free of charge nurse clinics run by our qualified nursing team during which we examine, eyes, ears, teeth, body condition, mobility, clip nails and give weight and feeding advice. If you would like to bring your cat in for a check up or if you have any concerns you would like to chat about please contact the surgery.

Katherine McNamee RVN, Head Nurse



VET NURSE LIFE—Tracy Thurstan RVN

It's 10.30pm and I'm just looking forward to getting into my comfortable bed when the telephone rings; it's our receptionist calling to let me know that an emergency is being taken to Settle surgery and that I am to meet the vet there immediately. Up and at 'em, I get dressed, defrost the car and set off into the night!

When I arrive at the surgery, the vet is already seeing the patient and her owner in the consulting room. It's a dog which has been in labour for some time and is struggling to give birth; she needs a caesarean. The owner gives her consent for us to operate and leaves us to prepare the bitch for surgery. I am there to monitor the anaesthetic and assist whilst the vet operates.

I've been a veterinary nurse for over 25 years and people often ask why I chose this vocation? The answer is simply that I love it! My role varies on a daily basis; admitting patients, taking x-rays and running laboratory tests, assisting in theatre and running preventative health clinics. I enjoy being part of a great team of professionals, achieving amazing things every day.

I also love the interaction with the clients and their pets. I believe it helps in times of stress to see a familiar face, an experienced member of the team who knows both you and your pet; that's why we at Dalehead believe it is so important to provide our own 24 hour emergency care, you will always speak to one of our team on the emergency out of hours telephone line and see one of our vets from the practice.



A safe delivery in case you were wondering, 9 healthy puppies to the first time mum and she is recovering nicely. Her owner is on the way in to greet the new arrivals and once the new mum and her puppies are ready to be discharged, and the surgery has been prepared for morning ops I will be heading home to bed...unless we get another call that is, you never know but that's part of the job that I love.

We have recently introduced a free 'Nurse Phone Back' service to complement our existing clinics. If you have any questions, please give us a call on 01729 823538.

Emma Spence our Practice Manager and Ally Younger our Companion Animal Co-ordinator headed down to Cardiff at the end of January to VPMA & SPVS Congress. The annual joint congress of the Veterinary Practice Managers Association and Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons, focuses on the non clinical side of Veterinary Practice.

At Dalehead Veterinary Group we understand the importance of building a strong supported team, and having the correct infrastructure for a successful business. Emma's focus was on the business streams, leadership and wellbeing and building of her team. We also work very hard to provide the highest standard of customer care at Dalehead Vets. Ally soaked up all she could at congress to focus on building the best possible client journey and experience.



SILVER AWARD CAT FRIENDLY CLINIC

What is a Cat Friendly Clinic?

An accredited Cat Friendly Clinic has reached a higher standard of cat care in that the staff:

- Understand the needs of cats and have made visits to the vet clinic more cat friendly
- Understand how to approach and handle cats gently and with care
- Have good knowledge and equipment to manage the care of cats



Achieving Cat Friendly Clinic accreditation involves all staff, from receptionists, nurses and technicians, through to vets. Each accredited clinic also has at least one 'Cat Advocate' – someone who ensures the cat friendly standards are adhered to, and who would be happy to talk to you.

Not only do we offer a cat waiting area for our feline patients, we also provide cat only clinic times each week.

In response to feedback from our cat owning clients we offering cat only clinics. We have split our cat clinic times to reflect this and to enable flexibility in booking an appointment.

CAT CLINIC APPOINTMENTS

Wednesday Mornings from 10:45am - 11:15am

Thursday Evenings from 5pm

Spaces can be limited so we would suggest booking ahead. We are of course still able to accommodate any cats during our normal surgery times.

COMPETITION TIME!

To share the feline celebrations this month we are running a competition. Any cats we see during February for one of our cat only clinic appointments, or any owner purchasing Hill's Feline Vet Essentials food from the practice will be entered into a raffle to win a 'Feline Hamper'. The winner will be announced in practice and via Facebook at the end of February.



Dalehead Veterinary Group is a trading name of Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd, a limited company, registered in England and Wales with the number 09445397.
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Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

