



Feline Oral Health

Why are regular dental treatments important for my cat?

Cats, like people, need regular dental care. Serious oral health problems can be addressed and prevented when you have your pet's teeth professionally treated at a veterinary hospital on a regular basis. Dental disease begins with **plaque**, a soft, colorless, sticky film that results from the combination of food debris, bacteria, and saliva. If plaque is not removed, it mineralizes and forms **calculus**. You may have noticed this hard material on your cat's teeth. If plaque and calculus are allowed to build up and are not removed, they can lead to **gingivitis**, an inflammation of the gum line, which is painful for your pet. It also encourages bacterial toxins to form along the gum line. At this stage, gingivitis is reversible with professional dental care and regular brushing. If gingivitis is left untreated, **periodontal disease**, a process that causes breakdown of the teeth's supporting structures (the components that keep teeth in place), will result. This will cause oral pain, loose teeth, decreased appetite, and more severe oral infection. As periodontal disease progresses, the gums recede, allowing bacteria to travel through the bloodstream to other parts of the body. These bacteria can cause disease in the heart, liver, and kidneys.

How can I tell if my cat has oral disease?

Signs of oral disease include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red, swollen, or bleeding gums | <input type="checkbox"/> Pawing at the mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pus along gum lines and around teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> Darkened, stained teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loose, broken, or abscessed teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive drooling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent foul mouth odor | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity around the mouth. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of appetite | |

If your cat exhibits any of these symptoms, please contact our hospital.

Oral Diseases of the Feline Patient

Feline Stomatitis

Stomatitis, also known as Lymphocytic Plasmacytic Stomatitis (LPS), is a serious and frequently misunderstood condition. It is thought to be an autoimmune disease (the body becomes allergic to plaque around the teeth), and is often found in cats with other autoimmune conditions, such as FIV and FeLV. Although not gingivitis, it is often found alongside gingivitis. Feline Stomatitis involves inflammation of the mouth which may extend into the throat or pharynx, causing angry, red lesions described as "cobblestone" in appearance. Cats with stomatitis suffer a great deal of pain, often affecting their eating habits. You may even see an affected cat pawing at its mouth.

Feline Odontoclastic Oral Resorption Lesions (FORL)

First described in 1976, feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions (FORLs), now affect 50% or more of cats over the age of 4 years. These painful lesions start as shallow pits that occur in the enamel and dentine of a tooth. Plaque accumulates, and the tissue surrounding the affected tooth becomes inflamed. If the condition worsens, the pit may extend into the tooth pulp, essentially killing the tooth. FORL are diagnosed through oral examination and oral radiographs. Extraction is usually the treatment of choice.

Why does my cat have to be anesthetized?

To perform a thorough, safe, and comfortable dental procedure, your pet must be anesthetized. To help ensure your cat's safety during treatment, we use the safest anesthetic agents available. A technician will continually monitor your cat's temperature, pulse, respiration, and other vital functions throughout the procedure until recovery from anesthesia. Because safety is our primary concern, our surgical suite and laboratory are equipped with several diagnostic instruments to assist us in monitoring your pet's condition at all times. Depending on our assessment of your cat's mouth during physical examination, we may recommend several types of testing, including retrovirus screening, blood tests, and other diagnostics to further reduce anesthetic risk.

What does a professional dental treatment involve?

Once under anesthesia, we will thoroughly examine your cat's teeth, gums, lips, tongue, and throat. Each tooth is checked for calculus, cavities, fractures, looseness, infection, or other problems that may cause pain or threaten your pet's health. The dental procedure includes hand scraping, ultrasonic scaling, polishing, and fluoride treatment. We may also perform more extensive dental care, if it's necessary. The best way to keep your pet happy and healthy is to prevent oral disease from developing. Annual physical examinations, blood testing, parasite prevention, dental treatments, vaccinations, and a healthy diet will promote good overall health and may increase your cat's lifespan.



Raritan Animal Hospital
1850 Lincoln Hwy, Edison NJ 08817
(732)985-0278
www.raritananimalhospital.com