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Dental Cleaning and Your Pet

Each time we examine your pet, we assess his/her oral health. Before we recommend a dental cleaning, we consider several factors: 1) the amount of tartar accumulation on the teeth 2) the overall health of your pet, because a dental cleaning requires an anesthetic 3) the expense for you. We realize the benefit for the pet has to outweigh the anesthesia and the expense. The truth is, if your pet's mouth isn't healthy, then your pet isn't healthy. Periodontal disease is very common and easy to prevent. It is an infection of the mouth that affects the gums and causes them to recede, weakening the teeth, and resulting in tooth loss. This infection gets into the bloodstream and spreads to the heart, liver and kidneys setting them up for failure. The following is a breakdown of a dental cleaning:

Pre-Anesthesia Blood Work:

This blood profile includes a complete blood count and an abbreviated chemistry. A complete blood count checks the red and white blood cells numbers showing any possible infection or anemia. A chemistry panel allows us to evaluate liver and kidney function, blood sugar level, and electrolytes. Normal organ function is important when an anesthetic is planned.

Pets are required to have the blood work with chemistry. If your pet's exam was not normal, or he/she is geriatric, we may recommend a more complete profile that includes a thyroid screen.

Antibiotics:

During a dental cleaning it is very common for the gums to bleed slightly, and which allows bacteria to be introduced into the bloodstream. Therefore we put your pet on antibiotics three days before their dental, and four days after. Cats receive a long acting injectable antibiotic at the time of their cleaning.

Anesthesia:

The fee is determined by how big your pet is and how long your pet needs to be under anesthesia to clean their teeth properly. We take anesthesia very seriously. *We believe that making sure your pet gets through his/her anesthesia safely is the most important job in our hospital.* During anesthesia your pet will be monitored by an EKG and a well-trained staff member at all times.

The staff member who performs the cleaning stays with your pet until it is fully awake and alert from the anesthesia. Once your pet is awake, the staff member will call you to let you know how the procedure went and if there were any extractions.

Ultrasonic Teeth Cleaning:

An ultrasonic scaler is used to clean away the tartar on the crown of the tooth and under the gum line. The fee is determined by how much tartar is present, and on the size of your pet. The bigger your pet's mouth is, the more there is to clean.

Fluoride Polish:

Scaling the teeth results in microscopic scratches in the enamel. A fluoride polish is used to smooth the scratches out. Otherwise, the tartar will re-accumulate very quickly.

Fluorofoam Treatment:

This helps to strengthen tooth enamel and decrease the rate of plaque formation. It also makes your pet's mouth smell fresh and clean!

Extractions:

The more difficult the extraction is, the more it costs. Unfortunately there is no way to tell if any or how many teeth need to be extracted until the pet is under anesthesia, as an awake pet won't allow us to probe the pockets to determine the degree of periodontal disease and bone loss around the tooth.