

# Dental Disease

## Periodontal Disease

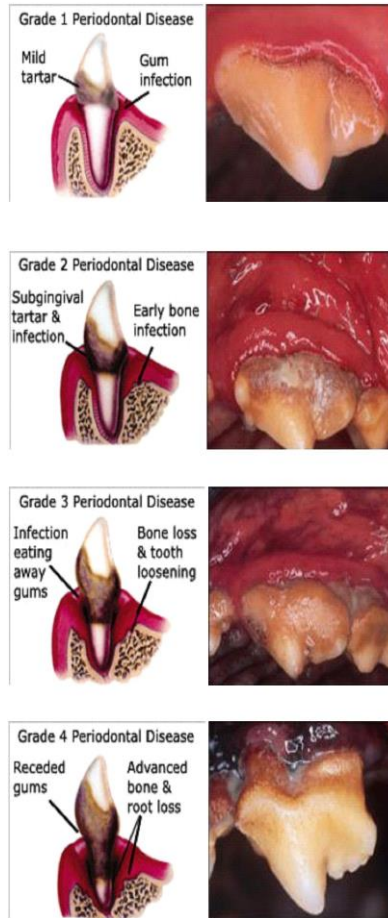
Periodontal disease, or dental disease, is one of the most common conditions in dogs and cats. Most pets will show signs of this disease by the age of 3 years. Although it is a common disease, it is unfortunately under-treated. This disease can cause multiple problems in the mouth, but it has also been linked to damage to internal organs. Periodontal disease begins when bacteria in the mouth forms a substance called plaque that sticks to the surface of the teeth. Minerals in the mouth harden the plaque into dental calculus, or tarter. Tarter is usually noticeable to most owners, but it in itself is not the cause of the disease. The real problem develops as plaque and calculus spread under the gum line. Once the bacteria is under the gum line a cycle of damage is set into motion that effects the tissue around the tooth, eventually leading to tooth loss. Periodontal disease includes gingivitis and periodontitis. Gingivitis is inflammation or reddening of the gums. Periodontitis is loss of bone and soft tissue around the teeth. Both of these conditions can be very painful if untreated. Along with forming plaque, bacteria from the mouth can also enter the bloodstream and be carried through the body where it can cause changes in the heart, liver, and kidneys.

## Dental Cleanings

There are procedures available to prevent and treat these conditions. Our canine and feline patients must be anesthetized to appropriately treat dental disease. The process is very similar to what a person's dental hygienist & dentist perform. A dental prophy (cleaning and polishing the teeth) will remove the tarter & plaque build-up as well as help to remove the bacteria from under the gum line. The areas around the teeth are probed to see if the tissue has been effected severely enough to result in the extraction of a tooth. Just like with people, when a tooth is unhealthy and a source of pain, the patient is much happier when it is removed. Even if the dental disease is not severe, routine dental cleanings will help prevent tooth loss and the progression of periodontal disease.

## Signs of Dental Disease

- Bad Breath
- Loss of appetite
- Reluctant to play with toys
- Difficulty eating & chewing food
- Tarter build up & red or inflamed gums
- Change in behavior, depressed
- Upper respiratory infection
- Tooth loss



## Home Care

After the teeth have been cleaned, home care is important. Brushing daily as well as the use of dental treats or bones can help decrease tarter build up. However, just like with people, routine dental cleanings are recommended to maintain good dental health.

