



## *Periodontal Disease in Dogs and Cats*



The most frequent complaint of senior pet owners is dental problems, including bad breath and difficulty eating. More than 85% of dogs and cats over four years of age have some form of periodontal disease (a painful inflammatory condition in which bacteria attack the gums, ligament, and bone tissues that surround and support the teeth). Senior pets, generally those seven or more years of age, are especially susceptible to periodontal disease.

It is very important to have your pet's teeth examined by your veterinarian on a routine basis. If left unchecked, bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and travel to major organs, starting infection and seriously compromising the health of your pet.

Most periodontal infections begin with plaque, which is composed of bacteria, salivary proteins, and food debris. Plaque builds up in the groove between the teeth and gums, causing irritation, redness, and swelling. Eventually pockets of plaque form and deepen, allowing bacteria to damage the tissues that hold teeth in place.

At this stage, bacteria from the oral infection have a clear path to your pet's bloodstream and vital organs. The organs with the highest blood flow are most susceptible to infections. These include the lungs, heart, kidneys, liver and brain. Damage to these organs caused by infection may shorten your pet's life.

### **The following are clinical signs of periodontal disease:**

- ✓ Bad breath- one of the first signs of dental disease
- ✓ A yellowish-brown crust of plaque on the teeth near the gum line
- ✓ Red and swollen gums
- ✓ Pain or bleeding when your pet eats or when the mouth or gums are touched
- ✓ Decreased appetite or difficulty eating
- ✓ Loose or missing teeth

### **There is a lot you can do to help prevent periodontal disease for your pet! The following are some treatment options that may help to keep your pet's breath fresh and his or her teeth and gums healthy:**

- ✓ Brushing at least 3 times per week (everyday is ideal).
- ✓ Rinsing with Nolvadent or CET rinse in between brushing (everyday is ideal).
- ✓ CET chews for treats at least 3 times per week.
- ✓ Hill's T/D diet as a primary diet or as treats.
- ✓ Use a water additive such as CET Aquadent.

Remember, regular dental checkups are important to maintaining not only your pet's oral health, but overall health as well. In



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fact, because our pets age more quickly than humans, dental exams should become more frequent, perhaps every six months, as your pet ages. Think of it as a necessary part of your pet's preventive care plan. Talk to your veterinarian about professional dental care and what you can do to keep your pet's teeth and body healthy.

## Flip the lip on your pet! How does your pet rate?

**Grade I** dental disease: There are very early signs of gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). There will be a small degree of staining on the teeth and the gums next to the teeth will have a small amount of light red discoloration, but no regression.



**Grade III** dental disease: There is significant inflammation and swelling of the gums, but they also have developed receding gum lines and early bone loss around the teeth.



**Grade II** dental disease: There is significant inflammation (redness) of the gums. In addition, the gums will begin to swell and even recede slightly from the teeth.



**Grade IV** dental disease: This is the most severe; these teeth have all of the signs of Grade III, but in addition, there will be a pus-like discharge and the teeth will be unstable (loose).

