

### Dental Facts

85% of all dogs and 70% of all Cats over 1 year of age have some degree of periodontal disease, but only 3% get treated.

Your pet's teeth need care just like yours. Daily removal of plaque is the key to an oral hygiene program. Without an oral hygiene program, plaque, which is an accumulation of bacteria, will build up at the gum line. Eventually, calculus forms, further irritating the gums and the infection processes to loosen and destroy the attachment of the tooth. In addition to loose teeth, infection under the gum line can spread to the liver, kidneys, and heart. Daily tooth brushing, using a soft tooth brush and pet tooth paste, is the best home dental care you can provide for your pet. Do not use human tooth paste because it has detergents that should not be swallowed. When brushing is not possible, a daily antibacterial oral rinse or gel will help slow the accumulation of plaque. Some chew toys can help, and C.E.T. chews are a good preventative. Also, IVD dental diet is specially designed food that mechanically aids in the removal of plaque and tartar. Examine your pet's teeth monthly. Look for accumulation of yellow or brown material at the area where the tooth meets the gumline, especially over the cheek teeth and canines. Once you notice plaque or tartar accumulation, it is time for a professional cleaning. Do not wait.

A dental prophylaxis is a more extensive procedure than simply cleaning the crowns with a dental scaler. Dental disease occurs below the gumline. By removing calculus from the tooth, you are not removing disease below the gumline. At Westbrook Animal Hospital, when your pet has their teeth cleaned, we perform dental prophylaxis, periodontal debridement and polishing. Efforts are concentrated on the sub gingival area (below the gumline) where infection can develop. Anesthesia is necessary when performing teeth cleaning because it provides three important functions: immobilization in order to clean below the gum line, pain control, and the ability to place a tube into the trachea, so bacterial products do not enter the respiratory system.