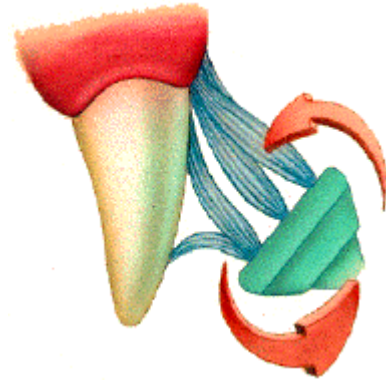


Actually, every day at Emerson Animal Hospital is Dental Day, for the health of you pet.

February was officially established as National Pet Dental Health Month in 1993 by the AVDS, the American Veterinary Dental College and the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry. Emerson Animal Hospital is offering special promotions and incentives all month long in an effort to increase public awareness of the dangers of periodontal disease.



### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY PET HAS A DENTAL?

When your pet is admitted to the hospital for a dental cleaning, it is usually after a recent physical exam that indicated that your pet had some level of periodontal disease, plaque accumulation or gingivitis. Studies have shown that 85% of all dogs and cats over one year old have some degree of periodontal disease. Imagine what our mouths would look like if we never brushed!!

Your pet is then handled by our technicians who obtain pre-anesthetic bloodwork. This gives the veterinarian an idea of your animal's liver and kidney function, screens for other blood disorders and gives us an idea of how well your animal will metabolize the anesthesia and how fast it will be removed from the body.

Once your animal has been cleared for surgery, it is given a subcutaneous (under the skin) injection of a sedative/pain reliever. A few minutes later, the animal is relaxed and groggy. He/She is then given an intravenous (in the vein) injection of anesthetic, and drifts off to sleep. A tube is placed in the trachea to assist with breathing, and the plane of anesthesia is maintained via gas through that same tube. The animal is observed at all times by a technician, and

machines measure pulse and respirations.

The supragingival (above the gumline) plaque and tartar are removed using special calculus forceps, hand instruments, and power scaling equipment. We examine individual teeth for mobility, fractures, malocclusion, and periodontal disease (probe for pocket depths after calculus is removed). Special curettes are used to probe the subgingival (below the gumline) spaces as well as remove any deposits.

Regardless of how careful we are during the scaling/curettage phase of teeth cleaning, minor defects of the tooth surface occur. Polishing smoothes out the defects and removes plaque missed during previous steps. Pumice or polishing paste is used on a polishing cup for the procedure. Any excess paste or debris is flushed away when the teeth are rinsed. A fluoride rinse or oral gel can then be applied.

The pet owner is an integral part of our dental team. Home care is the single most important procedure the owner can do to maintain oral health. If performed regularly, daily brushing will dramatically increase the interval between teeth cleaning appointments.

Plaque is constantly being made and deposited in the mouth. Humans have a buildup of plaque in the morning, that makes our breath smell bad. Proper home care can keep plaque buildup under control. The goal of dental home care is to remove plaque from tooth surfaces and gingival sulci before it mineralizes into calculus, a process that occurs within days of a teeth cleaning. Success depends on the owner's ability to daily brush the teeth, as well as the dog or cat's acceptance of the process. True oral cleanliness can only be achieved through the mechanical action of toothbrush bristles above and below the gingiva.

Home care is best started at a young age before the adult teeth erupt. The perfect time to introduce dental home care is at the first puppy or kitten visit. The

client-animal bond as well as the client-veterinary bond is enhanced when daily brushing is performed following instructions given at the animal hospital.

Clients often ask, "doesn't hard food keep teeth clean?" Some believe when their dog or cat chews on hard food or biscuits, mineral deposits are broken down and the teeth stay clean. This is not true. True, animals on soft diets accumulate plaque more readily than those on dry foods, but the only way to keep teeth clean above and below the gum line is by daily brushing. There are other dental and oral products (CHEWS) that can be used to help clean your pet's teeth and gums, but they are not as effective. There is also a specially formulated pet food with dental benefits for dogs and cats. Created by Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc., Hill's® Prescription Diet® Canine t/d® or Prescription Diet Feline t/d® can help reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar. This food is available through your veterinarian.

For more information on Dental Month, to make a dental appointment or to learn more about your pet's dental and oral health, call us at Emerson Animal Hospital and we will be happy to help you. Phone 254-772-3520