

Seneca Veterinary News



Dental Information

-Puppies have 28 temporary teeth. They begin to be replaced by adult teeth at 4 months old. They have all their adult teeth about 6 months old. An adult dog has 42 teeth.

-Kittens have 26 temporary teeth. They also begin to fall out and be replaced at 4 months of age. All adult teeth are in around 6 months of age. An adult cat has 30 teeth.

-Periodontal disease is the most common health problem seen in pets

Most of us brush our teeth at least twice a day, but can we say the same about our pets? Studies have shown that 70% of cats and 80% of dogs have some form of periodontal disease.

What is periodontal disease? Periodontal disease is inflammation of the gums. When food particles are left on the teeth it causes bacteria to grow. If let go, this forms plaque on the teeth.

When the plaque is left on the teeth, it mixes with saliva and eventually forms a calculus (hard cement like buildup on the teeth). The calculus on the teeth causes gum irritation known as gingivitis. When left untreated at this point the calculus causes bacteria to get trapped under the gum line. This leads to destruction of the tooth and the supporting ligaments. When left untreated the bacteria from the mouth can go systemic (into the bloodstream). These systemic bacteria can lead to heart, kidney, and liver disease, especially in older pets.

Signs of periodontal disease. An early sign of periodontal disease is bad breath. Other symptoms include pawing at the face, reluctance to eat and red or swollen gums.

Prevention of periodontal disease. Just like people, the best prevention is regular teeth cleaning. You can do this at home with a toothpaste and toothbrush specially designed for pets. Daily cleaning is the best thing to do, if you can't do daily cleaning try to do at least once a week. Hard foods are better to feed your pet. The hard food helps

scrape off some of the bacteria as they chew. For dogs prone to periodontal disease, there are prescription foods available that help prevent the tartar formation.

Treatment of periodontal disease. The best treatment in the advanced cases is a professional cleaning. To do this, your pet is put on antibiotics prior to the procedure. This cuts down on some of the bacteria in the mouth protecting both the pet and the person performing the procedure. Your pet will be sedated for the procedure. This ensures that all the teeth, including the tongue side of the teeth, get a thorough cleaning. We use an ultrasonic cleaner to remove the calculus from the teeth and from under the gum line. Once the calculus is removed we can evaluate the tooth. If disease is advanced to the point the tooth roots are showing, or the tooth is loose, it will need to be extracted. After the teeth are all cleaned we polish them. This leaves the teeth clean and smooth so it is harder for bacteria to stick to the teeth. The final step for us is to apply fluoride to the teeth. The fluoride adds an additional barrier on the teeth against bacteria.