



Bent Tree Animal Hospital, P.A.

Oral Health

At Bent Tree Animal Hospital, we want to share with you the importance of a healthy oral cavity for your pet. It is not only important to make your pet's breath fresh and mouth clean, but it is essential for adult and aging animals to have a healthy oral cavity. A healthy oral cavity will significantly reduce the risk of infection and periodontal disease which can affect other organ systems.

Kittens

- Have a total of 26 teeth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, and 6 premolars on the roof of the mouth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, and 4 premolars on the bottom of the mouth

Puppies

- Have a total of 28 teeth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, and 6 premolars on the roof of the mouth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, and 6 premolars on the bottom of the mouth

* Kittens and Puppies typically get their adult incisors at 4-6 months of age, then their canines, premolars and molars at 6-7 months of age.

Cats

- Have a total of 30 teeth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, and 6 premolars, 2 molars on the roof of the mouth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, 4 premolars, and 2 molars on the bottom of the mouth

Dogs

- Have a total of 42 teeth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, 8 premolars, and 4 molars on the roof of the mouth
- 6 incisors, 2 canines, 8 premolars, and 6 molars on the bottom of the mouth

Brushing teeth

- It is important to brush your pet's teeth at an early age, not only to clean their teeth from debris and bacteria, but also to allow your pet to become used to having their teeth closely examined without resistance.
- This technique will require training so set aside a time to do this with your pet.
- Begin by gently stroking your pet around the mouth with your finger for a few days until they are comfortable (some pets may require more time)
- Then apply a small sample of toothpaste on your finger and let them taste the flavor for the next few days
- Be sure to use a toothpaste approved for animal use
- Introduce the finger brush by placing it on your finger with toothpaste and allowing your pet to taste it from the finger brush for several days
- Next, place your hand around the top of your pet's muzzle and lift their lip exposing the teeth and gums
- Place the toothbrush or finger brush just above the gum line and gently brush in a downward circular motion on the outer surface of one tooth for the next few days
- Incrementally, add all remaining teeth during this process
- Be sure to praise and reward your pet during all phases of this process

Stages of Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease is the most common disease of animals and is caused by plaque which forms around the gum line and is made up of food debris, bacteria and cells. If this plaque is not removed from the mouth, it will mineralize and form calculus on the teeth. There are four stages of periodontal disease one being the least amount of disease and four being the greatest degree of disease.

Stage 1 – Gingivitis: redness along gums which is caused by plaque and bacteria

Stage 2 – Early Periodontitis: plaque on teeth, gingivitis, and infected bony tissue, causing recessed gums and pockets around teeth. There can be up to 25% bone/tissue loss.

Stage 3 – Moderate Periodontitis: halitosis, gingivitis and bleeding gums, calcified plaque (calculus) covering tooth surfaces, up to 50% bone/tissue loss

Stage 4 – Advanced Periodontitis: severe amount of bacteria in mouth, blood and pus surrounding teeth, loose teeth and pain, bacteria affecting they patient systemically, more than 50% of bone/tissue loss

*Stages 2-4 will need dental radiographs to evaluate the % of bone loss and confirm the resulting stage of dental disease

Potential effects of unhealthy oral cavity on the organ systems:

Brain – In rare cases bacteria will cross the blood – brain barrier and can cause damage in the brain.

Mouth – bad breath, soreness, destruction of gums, loose teeth, tooth abscesses and infection and bone loss in the jaw

Respiratory – bacteria can infect the lungs causing bronchitis. Also, dental disease can be a source of chronic nasal or eye discharge.

Heart – inflamed gums can allow bacteria to enter the blood stream which can cause inflammation and damage to the heart.

Liver – an increase in circulating bacteria to the liver can cause damage and can result in a variety of liver disorders.

Kidneys – similarly to the liver, an increase in bacteria can cause infection in the kidneys and chronic kidney disease