



*from*

## All Creatures Veterinary Hospital



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DOCTOR'S EDITORIAL ...

WINTER 2003

### A New Year's Wish

The news these days is often filled with stories of anxiety-producing events. Articles about murders, terrorism, Afghanistan and the threat of war often produce sleepless nights. This feeling is especially true for those families with a loved one in harm's way. Both our hearts and our appreciation go to those with a son, daughter, husband or wife in the police or fire department or in the military, for we understand what they must be going through. But as the federal government is ordering up millions of doses of smallpox vaccine and as the Department of Homeland Security starts to gear up, we realize that we Americans are all "on the Front". The potential for danger is real and it lurks - either from a foreign radical or a home-grown sniper - close by. None of us really feels secure. We all have a fear that "it could happen".

Our New Year's wish this year is simple - we wish you all peace of mind. We suggest that all of us take a good inventory of our blessings - especially our family, our friends and our loved ones. May we find peace in our blessings for this tends to put our fears in perspective. Let us find peace in the things that really matter to us. If an old relationship has recently soured, try to mend it for this will help to secure peace in your heart. If a loved one needs help or financial assistance, lend a hand for this is a worthy investment. Don't take relationships for granted, they may be fleeting. Express your love and appreciation for others as this will be cherished. Find peace where you can, for in times of peril, this may become a welcomed commodity. Hug your husband or wife. Hug your children. Hug your loved ones and, especially, give a big hug to your dog and cat! Our pets give us unconditional love, affection, loyalty and peace of heart - perhaps we should all be a little more like our pets!

Have a wonderful, and peaceful, 2003!



## Why Does Your Pet Need Dental Care?



*Tens of thousands of years ago, Fido's and Kitty's ancestors kept their teeth clean and gums healthy by continually chewing on bones and, in general, being carnivores. This eating behavior greatly helped their dental health.*

*Today's canines and felines are no longer the fierce predators of yesteryear. The contemporary diet of canned food doesn't supply the physical cleaning action required to maintain proper dental health. Instead, most of today's diets lead to dental disease. Interestingly, our pet's dental health as well as their dental problems are similar to ours. As we list the development of pet dental problems, you will note these similarities.*

### Causes of Periodontal or Gum Disease

**1. Tartar Buildup:** Dental disease begins with a buildup of tartar along the gum line. As the buildup increases, gaps are created between the teeth and gums. This allows bacteria a clear passageway to the roots of the teeth.

**2. Gingivitis Develops:** Painful infection ultimately develops between the teeth and gums. Ultimately, the infection causes the teeth to become loose and fall out.

Left untreated, Periodontal Disease leads to the proliferation of harmful bacteria from the mouth to other parts of the body where vital organs such as the heart, kidneys and liver are attacked. In severe cases, death can occur.

### Signs of Periodontal Disease

- Persistent bad breath ("Doggie Breath")
- Sensitivity around the mouth
- Pawing at the mouth
- Loss of appetite
- Inflamed, receding or bleeding gums
- Creamy-brown tartar buildup on teeth
- Loose or missing teeth
- Difficulty eating and chewing food

### Treatment

Regular dental check-ups by the veterinarian are vital. The interval between these visits varies from pet to pet depending upon their condition. Usually the dental procedure your pet will undergo includes the following:

1. Administration of a general anesthesia (Although never totally risk-free, the current state-of-the-art veterinary anesthesia poses minimal risk.)
2. Ultrasonic scaling
3. Subgingival manual scaling
4. Polishing

### Home Dental Care

One of the factors that influences the intervals between recommended veterinary dental visits is the consistency and quality of the home care your pets receive. Here are some suggestions that will help prevent oral health problems:

**1. Regularly brush your pet's teeth.** Our staff can show you how this is done and present some helpful hints on how to introduce your pet to a home dental routine. Additionally, we have all of the products you need to get started including toothpaste especially formulated for animals. (Note: Do not use toothpaste formulated for humans on pets as this may cause stomach problems.)

**2. Watch your pet's diet.** Soft or sticky foods should be avoided. There are commercially available diets with dental benefits that are available and we would be happy to discuss these with you. Certain chew toys are beneficial.

### Why do pets need routine dental care?

*80% of dogs and  
70% of cats  
develop gum disease  
by the age of three years!*

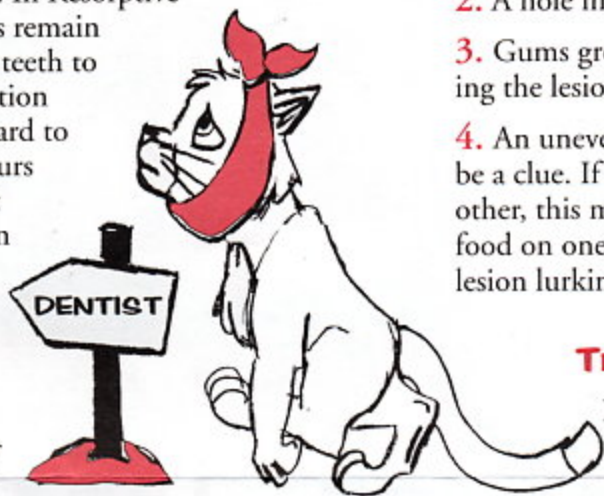
Source: American Veterinary Dental Society

## RESORPTIVE LESIONS IN FELINE TEETH

### What is it?

In the young cat's mouth are cells called *Osteoclasts* which are present so that the roots of the temporary teeth can be resorbed thus leaving room for the growth of the permanent teeth. In Resorptive Lesions, the Osteoclasts remain causing the permanent teeth to also undergo an absorption process. This is often hard to see as it most often occurs below the gum line but eventually the tooth can become weak and break off leaving the roots behind.

Obviously, Resorptive Lesions require the immediate attention of the veterinarian.



### Who is affected?

Up to 16% of cats less than 6 years of age and up to 74% of cats over 6 years of age may have Resorptive Lesions. In general, it is thought that approximately 28% of domestic cats develop at least one painful Resorptive Lesion during their lifetime.

### Telltale Signs

1. The most obvious sign of Resorptive Lesions is PAIN. It is difficult to check cats' teeth under near-perfect conditions but it is almost impossible when Kitty is in pain. Obviously, this pain most often leads to behavioral changes in your cat.
2. A hole in the side of a tooth is a sign.
3. Gums growing up the sides of the teeth, usually hiding the lesions underneath, may also be a sign.
4. An uneven pattern of tartar in the cat's mouth may be a clue. If there is tartar on one side and clean on the other, this may indicate that the cat is only chewing its food on one side of the mouth due to the pain of the lesion lurking beneath the gums.

### Treatment

It was once thought that Resorptive Lesions were like cavities in humans. Attempts to fill them proved futile as the lesions continued to grow under the filling. Unfortunately, at the present time, the only way to relieve the discomfort of a lesion is to remove the tooth. Although drastic, this is far superior to letting the cat live in pain with the likelihood that the tooth will eventually break off, painfully exposing the roots.

## PET DENTAL TRIVIA

Puppies have 28 temporary teeth that erupt at about 3 to 4 weeks. Their 42 permanent teeth emerge at about 4 months.

Kittens have 26 temporary teeth that begin to erupt at about 2 to 3 weeks. They have 30 permanent teeth that erupt at about 3 to 4 months.

Gum disease is more common in smaller canine breeds because experts believe small dogs' teeth are too large for their mouths thus forcing the teeth closer together.



## Suggestions for Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

Brushing your pet's teeth is not as difficult as it sounds. Here are some helpful suggestions:



1. Select a convenient time each day when you are relaxed and not feeling rushed.

2. Initially, hold your pet as you normally would if you were petting the animal. Next, gently stroke your pet along the checks and then, inserting your index finger gently in the pet's mouth, rub your index finger along the gumline. Make sure you give your pet a treat after each session.

3. Next, place a small amount of pet-formulated toothpaste on your

finger and let your pet sample the flavor. Next,

introduce your pet to a pet toothbrush or finger brush. Place a small amount of toothpaste onto the brush, gently open your pet's upper lip and place the brush against an upper tooth. With a slow circular motion, gently brush only that tooth and the adjoining gum line.

4. As your pet allows, slowly increase the number of teeth that you brush. Remember, it helps to reward your pet after each session.

Of course, please contact us if you have any specific questions about your pet and the brushing process.

## IS YOUR PET OVERWEIGHT?

1. How difficult is it to feel your pet's ribs when you run your hands along its sides?

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| a. Difficult   | 3 |
| b. Fairly easy | 1 |
| c. Very easy   | 0 |

2. How much daily exercise does your pet receive?

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| a. Little or no         | 2 |
| b. Less than 30 minutes | 1 |
| c. 30 minutes or more   | 0 |

3. Has your pet been spayed or neutered?

Yes 1 No 0

4. How often does your pet receive treats, snacks or table scraps?

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| a. Multiple times  | 2 |
| b. Once a day      | 1 |
| c. Rarely or never | 0 |

Total Score: If your score was above three, your pet may need to lose weight. Call for an appointment to see the doctor who will recommend the weight loss program best for your pet.

## PETS FOR SENIORS

Pets help seniors live longer, healthier and more enjoyable lives.

A study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society demonstrated that independently living seniors who have pets tend to have better physical health and mental well being than those who do not have pets. These seniors are more active, cope better with stress and have better overall health. The study showed that elderly pet owners had significantly lower blood pressure overall than their contemporaries without pets. In fact, an

experimental residential home for the elderly called the "Eden Alternative", which is filled with over 100 birds, dogs and cats and has an outside environment with rabbits and chickens, has experienced an astounding 15% lower mortality rate over the past five years than traditional nursing homes!

