

Dentistry in adult dogs...

I was totally unaware that dogs have dental problems

Dental disease is as common in dogs as in humans and is just as painful. Unfortunately dogs don't have the ability to communicate their discomfort so therefore dental hygiene is overlooked.

Are the problems the same?

No. In humans the most common dental problems are caries and decay which is due to demineralisation (loss of calcium) from the enamel and dentine resulting in painful infected cavities. In the dog, decay only represents around 10% of dental problems, the majority of which are caused by periodontal disease.

What are we doing wrong?

Whilst genetics has a part to play, the major cause of dental disease is the commercial diets we feed dogs. Any food which leaves food residue will promote dental disease. Some foods recommended by your vet are designed to provide top quality nutrition as well as leaving little or no food residue to promote dental disease.

What is periodontal disease?

This is simply infection in the tissue surrounding the tooth. Accumulation of tartar on the teeth will cause the gums to recede from the base of the tooth. Infection soon follows and due to the inflammation of the gums (gingivitis), the gum soon recedes. Untreated infection spreads into the tooth socket resulting in the tooth loosening and falling out.

Is periodontal disease very common?

Approximately 85% of dogs over the age of 3 years will suffer some degree of periodontitis, making it the most common oral disease and a horrific statistic.

What is tartar and how can it be prevented?

The dog's mouth is a very unhygienic environment housing millions of bacteria. Many of the bacteria will breed on

the surfaces of the tooth and form an invisible layer called plaque. Some of this is removed by the dog's tongue and chewing habits but if allowed to remain the plaque will thicken. Plaque then mineralises and is visible as tartar. The tartar as it thickens, presses on the gums, which recede and the bacteria then results in gingivitis. The gums gradually recede and the socket becomes infected resulting in the loss of tooth. As the infection in the mouth increases, tonsillitis and pharyngitis can also occur.

The bacteria are absorbed into the blood stream and carried to other organs. Heart problems in older dogs are frequently due to poor oral health. Liver and kidney problems can also occur.

How can tartar be prevented?

Plaque builds up quicker in some dogs than others but you can help minimise the problem. Feeding dry food, giving a suitable chew toy and brushing the teeth can all aid in reducing dental problems. Not all dry foods are the same. Many are biscuit which goes soft in the mouth leaving sticky food residue.

Good preventative foods are dry AND stay dry until they reach the stomach despite being crushed by the teeth. As a result little or no food residue remains in the mouth after eating to promote dental disease and tartar.

Never use human toothpaste as it is far too harsh on the enamel and is designed to be 'spat' out.

Doggie toothpaste is specially designed to be eaten... and tastes good too!

Retained Temporary canines

Some junior dogs will still have their baby canine teeth (fangs) at 6 months old. These may need removing under anaesthetic so please mention this to the nurse or veterinary surgeon. We can extract them when your dog is in to be neutered which will save costs and a further anaesthetic.