



## Your Cat's Oral Health

Periodic teeth cleaning and at home dental care provide great overall health benefits for your cat. We always assess your cat's oral health at each of your pet's visits. Routinely in your pet's life we will recommend a professional 12 step teeth cleaning or prophylaxis, we refer to this procedure as Safeguard cleaning. We recommend this procedure to prevent dental disease expense in the future. Just as preventative care for your cat is relatively inexpensive, treating dental disease can be significantly more expensive. A good comparison is routine oil changes vs. having to have the engine rebuilt in your car. Preventative Safeguard cleanings let us help you keep your cat as healthy as possible.

Our philosophy is to provide the best in health care to your cat and in dental care we perform a 12 step dental cleaning. Each of the 12 steps are interlinked and very important. Please keep in mind that not all clinics perform these 12 steps. We have briefly described our Safeguard cleaning procedure below and encourage you to ask our staff any questions you may have.

1. **Oral Examination of the awake cat** - During a routine physical exam there is a limit to what we can see on the awake cat for example, 40% of bone loss due to disease can only be seen with dental radiographs (commonly referred to as "X-rays"). Therefore, when doing the exam under anesthesia we often find more problems than we do on an awake cat.

2. **Oral examination on anesthetized cat** - While your cat is under general anesthesia we examine each tooth for mobility, fractures, malocclusions and periodontal disease using a probe to access the depth of pockets.

*\*Safe anesthesia is the number one concern for both pet owners and medical professionals alike. Be assured that although every anesthetic procedure carries with it a risk to your pet, we use the best available procedures and monitoring equipment before, during and after your pet's procedure; the most important of these are by blood pressure monitoring. Please feel free to discuss any of your questions or concerns about anesthesia with our staff.\**

3. **Supragingival (above the gum line) scaling** which removes plaque & tartar from the tooth surface with the use of an ultrasonic scaler & hand instruments



4. **Subgingival (under the gum line) scaling**. Tartar that is not visible to the eye hides under your cat's gum line causing inflammation, bone loss & pain. This step is a critical part of excellent dental care and requires your cat to be under general anesthesia. Gum disease is painful, to humans and to pets. That is why human dentists use "Novocain" to eliminate pain in humans. Pets will also experience pain as their inflamed gums are handled during the removal of tartar below the gum line. Anesthesia is necessary to perform proper, correct and effective cat dental care so that the diseased tissue debris below the inflamed, painful gums can be removed.

5. **Charting** is recording the disease that is present before starting therapy. Charting includes recording missing, loose, fractured and discolored teeth as well as any feline resorptive lesions, periodontal pocket depths, gum recession and other significant findings.

6. **Polishing** with a fine grit polish which helps smooth any minor defects on the tooth surface. This is the only way to prevent tartar from immediately re-establishing. The method of only "flicking" tartar off during an awake exam forgoes this crucial step and exposes the gums to bleeding and bacteria and then quick re-accumulation of tartar.

7. **Irrigation** is a complete rinsing and drying of the mouth with pressurized water and air which removes diseased tissue and plaque from the mouth.

8. **Fluoride** is applied to dry teeth in the form of a foam, and left undisturbed for four minutes. Fluoride helps maintain the strength of the teeth and protect the enamel.

9. **Diagnostics**, if necessary will be performed at this time in the dental procedure. 75% of dental patients should have dental radiographs ("x-rays") taken. There are several indications for a patient to receive radiographs; discolored, mobile or fractured teeth, and gingival recession. Another common reason for dental radiographs is when a Feline Ontoclastic Resorptive Lesion (FORL) is noted. The FORL is similar to a human cavity and just as your dentist would take radiographs of your mouth prior to any oral surgery, we do the same for your cat to ensure proper assessment and treatment.



10. **Advanced Therapy** to treat any problems that are noted during the dental procedure. Most often advanced therapy includes oral surgery.

\*Dental radiographs, other diagnostics and advanced therapy go beyond our dental safeguard procedure. These diagnostics and treatments require extra time and expertise. The diagnostics allow our Doctors to devise the proper treatment plan for your pet's health. It is imperative that we are able to reach you while your cat is under anesthesia as we may need to update you on your pet's condition and discuss the treatment plan and cost.\*

11. **Discharge information and home care instructions**- At the time of discharge we will discuss the dental care performed, make follow up recommendations and dispense any necessary medications. Because you as the pet owner are a vital part of our dental team, the dental visit is not complete until we discuss maintaining and improving oral health for your cat.



Daily home care is the single most important procedure the owner can do to maintain oral health. As plaque is constantly being made and deposited in the mouth, daily teeth brushing will dramatically reduce the number of professional cleanings your pet will need in a life time. If your cat has other dental health concerns we may also recommend adding a special diet, vitamin supplements and at home sealants.

12. **Follow up visits** are an important part of assessing your pet's progress. The need for follow up visits will be dependent on the degree of disease and your ability to provide at home care.