



ANIMAL ANTICS

Note for Pet Owners:

Pet Patrol 365 provides this information for educational purposes only. You should seek the advice of your veterinarian if your pet is ill, as only they can correctly advise on the diagnosis and the recommended treatment for your pet.

DENTAL DISEASE IN DOGS & CATS

What is tartar and how does it arise?

The origin of tartar is dental plaque. Plaque is an invisible film that covers the teeth, containing a mixture of food debris, white blood cells, micro-organisms and dead cells. This environment is perfect for the bacteria contained to proliferate. The phosphorus and calcium salts in saliva then allow plaque to mineralise to form the hard tartar (calculus) that we are familiar with. The roughened surface of this tartar is perfect for collecting more plaque and so the condition progresses.

What does this cause?

The tartar itself is a fairly inert substance that does not necessarily cause further disease. The plaque, however, is the main concern due to the bacterial content. Bacterial endotoxins are released from the large spectrum of plaque bacteria. These cause breakdown and thus irritation and inflammation of the gum layer surrounding the teeth (gingivitis). The first sign of inflammation around the teeth (periodontal disease) is a red inflamed gum over the individual teeth. As this progresses, the tissues supporting the tooth are eroded leading to eventual tooth loss.

What are the causes?

The potential causal factors are numerous. They may include:

- The individual animal's genetics.
- Conformation of the mouth - small breeds or short nosed breeds (Pug, Persian etc) where the teeth may be rotated or overcrowded.
- Diet - dry diets can be better than wet. Sticky diets can leave debris surrounding the teeth.
- Retained temporary teeth.

How does periodontal disease affect my dog or cat?

It can affect your pet in the obvious ways such as bad breath, pain when eating, blood streaking in the saliva, or excess saliva production (drooling). However, the signs are not only limited to the mouth. The inflamed bleeding gum allows entry of bacteria into the blood stream. These can potentially deposit on tissue surfaces, ie: on heart valves etc, leading to an array of more generalised signs depending on where they may settle.

How can I control this problem?

If the process is advanced, then ideal treatment involves scaling and polishing teeth, with extraction of any teeth that are severely affected. Scaling aids removal of all tartar, and polishing removes remaining plaque and roughened surfaces that plaque adheres to.

To prevent this problem occurring on clean teeth, the ideal treatment is daily tooth brushing. The enzymatic toothpaste (which is specifically designed for pets) and brushing aids removal of plaque and, if done frequently enough, will stop plaque mineralising and causing tartar. However, brushing is not achievable with all pets. In these cases there are specific diets, chews or even water supplements that can aid in plaque reduction.



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