

Dental Disease

Dental disease is a very common issue affecting roughly two-thirds of our adult cats. Proper preventative care and dental cleanings can help reduce the progression of this disease process.

Often your cat will not show any signs associated with dental disease, especially in the early stages. As the disease progresses you may notice pain when eating, chewing on one side of the mouth, dropping food, drooling, or decreased interest in eating.

Dental disease starts with a build-up of plaque on the teeth and if it is not removed will progress and mineralize to tartar and calculus. This is more damaging to the teeth and can lead to gingivitis and eventually periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is a progressive and non-reversible change.

Disease begins most commonly on the back teeth, which are harder to see. The build up begins along the gum-line and progresses over time.

Unique to cats is a disease known as FORL's or Feline Odontoclastic Resorptive Lesions. This is a destruction of the outer enamel of the tooth, which causes resorption of tooth from the outside in leaving a painful open lesion on the outside of the tooth.

Daily brushing is the most effective means to prevent significant dental disease. There are special tooth brushes and flavored tooth pastes that should be used. Also daily prescription dental diets are available to help counteract dental disease.

Routine dental cleanings (every 6-12 months) are done under general anesthesia. The teeth are ultrasonically scaled and polished. Only after sedation can a good thorough exam be performed as most cats are reluctant to allow a thorough exam while awake.

