



## Dental and Periodontal Disease

Dental or periodontal disease is the most common disease in small animals. By 2 years of age 70% of cats and 80% of dogs have some form of periodontal disease.

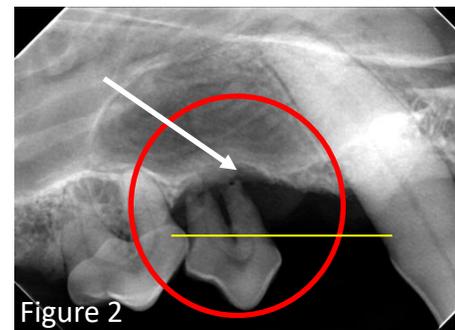
### What is Periodontal Disease?

- Periodontal disease is Inflammation and infection of the supportive structures of the tooth
- It is Painful!
- It is caused by plaque: a biofilm of bacteria that attaches to the tooth surface
  - Plaque makes its way down the tooth roots disrupting the supportive structures
  - It takes only 24 hours to form on the tooth
  - After 3 days, it hardens to tartar
  - Plaque causes inflammation of the gums or gingivitis in only 2 weeks
- Early stages cannot be seen by just looking at the teeth as it occurs below the gum line.
- Dental radiographs (x-rays) are needed to assess for periodontal disease
- Once advanced periodontal disease occurs extraction of the tooth is needed



### Clinical Signs

Bad Breath and redness of the gums are the most common clinical sign. Most dogs and cats do not show obvious signs of pain and continue to eat their food normally. There is a natural instinct to hide signs of pain. In more severe cases of dental disease dogs and cats may chew their food on one side to avoid contact of a more painful area. They may not eat their kibble as well as before, may drop food, hesitate or growl at it. Some animals will even become head shy, avoiding ear scratches and head pats.



*Figure 1 and 2: Periodontal disease can manifest as gingival (gum) recession and loss of attachment, deep gingival pockets, root exposure, furcation exposure (exposure of the space between roots, appearing as a hole), mobile teeth, and severe gingivitis. Figure 1 and 2 are a photo and radiograph of the same tooth in the same dog. Red circles highlight the area of concern. Yellow line is approximate normal "height" of jaw bone and white arrow points to level of receded bone (bone loss) in this dog.*

### Not Just the Teeth

Periodontal disease is a disease of the whole body and can affect the overall health of your dog and cat. Bacteria in the mouth can enter the blood stream and travel to the liver, kidneys and heart, setting up infections and causing organ dysfunction. Good oral health can improve overall health, quality of life and even improve life expectancy!



## Risk Factors

All dogs and cats are susceptible however breeds at higher risk of periodontal disease include small breed dogs, as well as dogs and cats with short noses. This is often because of crowding of the teeth or dental malocclusions (inappropriate bites). Even though all dogs and cats require good oral home care, special attention needs to be given to these at-risk patients as genetics is not on their side.

## Treatment and Prevention

The good news is that with a complete veterinary dental assessment and treatment in addition to good home care and brushing, the progression of periodontal disease can be reduced or even stopped to give your pet a pain-free and healthy mouth! They will thank you for it!



Figure 3

*Figure 3: A brachycephalic breed, the Boston Terrier, is at an increased risk of periodontal disease due to their oral conformation and crowding of their teeth.*

We are committed to work with you to achieve excellent oral health care for your pet. Preventive care is ultimately the best treatment possible and we look forward to discussing preventative options with you. Thank you for entrusting Nanaimo Veterinary Hospital with the care of your pet. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns at 250-758-3985 or by email at [nveth@shaw.ca](mailto:nveth@shaw.ca).

## Related Reading:

- [www.avdc.org](http://www.avdc.org) American Veterinary Dental College
- [www.vohc.org](http://www.vohc.org) Veterinary Oral Health Council
- [www.wsava.org](http://www.wsava.org) World Small Animal Veterinary Association, World Dental Guidelines
- [www.wcvds.ca](http://www.wcvds.ca) West Coast Veterinary Dental Services, Board Certified Veterinary Dental Specialists in Vancouver, BC
- [www.toothvet.ca](http://www.toothvet.ca) Dr Fraser Hale, Board Certified Veterinary Dental Specialist