



from

All Creatures Veterinary Hospital



509 BENICIA ROAD • VALLEJO, CA 94590

(707) 642-4405

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 306
Vallejo, CA

DOCTOR'S EDITORIAL ...

WINTER 2002

News from

All Creatures Veterinary Hospital

In the past year, we have begun using several new techniques and tools to help keep your pet healthy and happy. The biggest change is an in-house blood chemistry unit which will assist us in diagnostics. This allows us to perform bloodwork quickly at a lower cost to you. We have also put into place a new set of recommendations concerning surgical and geriatric patients. We are recommending that bloodwork be done on all pets prior to surgery and yearly as they reach their senior years. This gives us the opportunity to catch any illnesses early and to perform a much safer anesthetic procedure without hidden complications. We have also purchased an endoscope unit, allowing us to be less invasive in many procedures and offer more diagnostic options for your pets.

Also, a very new product, *Proheart 6*, has been developed as an injectable heartworm preventative effective for six months. As always, we are encouraging all clients to treat and, if needed, to test their dogs for heartworm as soon as possible.

Continuing to offer you the best medicine and compassion possible is one of our main goals for the new year. We hope we can help your pet to be a healthy and content member of the family.

Sincerely,

Your Friends at All Creatures

Have you looked into your dog or cat's mouth lately?



Take a moment while you are petting your dog or stroking your cat to carefully lift the flap of his or her lip and peek at your pet's teeth and gums. Chances are good you will notice the accumulation of plaque on your pet's teeth and possibly even a little redness around the gum line, the indications of Periodontal or Gum Disease. As a matter of fact, statistics indicate that approximately 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats over the age of three show signs of some form of oral disease! It starts as bacteria and plaque on teeth and progresses into a disease that can cause tooth decay, bleeding gums, tooth loss and even damage to the heart and other internal organs! As a matter of fact, oral disease is the number one health related problem diagnosed in dogs and cats.

The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends a three step program to help prevent oral disease:

1. Schedule your pet for a dental exam and dental cleaning by the veterinarian.
2. Routinely clean your pet's teeth at home using techniques our staff can teach you. We can also supply you the products you need.
3. Have regular dental checkups.

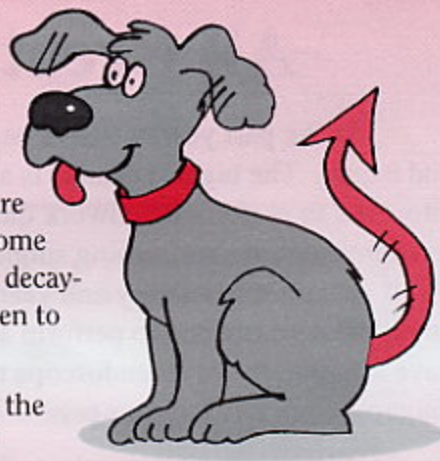
Because February is National Pet Dental Health Month, we strongly encourage you to start your dog or cat on its way to proper dental care by scheduling a dental examination and cleaning as soon as possible. Your pet will thank you for it!

Doggie breath is not a laughing matter!

■ We have all experienced it. Your dog attempts to give you a lick and you are hit with that smell ... doggie breath - a smell that often defies description! Some people think it smells like sour milk (Yuck!). Others think that it smells like decaying meat (Yuck!!). Others wonder what yucky thing their dog could have eaten to create such awful breath.

■ The chances are very good that what you are smelling is not coming from the pet's stomach. Most probably the smell is emanating from a witchy brew of decomposing food particles retained in the mouth, excessive bacteria levels associated with plaque and, sometimes, the rotting of the pet's gum tissues due to progressive gum disease. Clinically, this is referred to as Halitosis.

■ The most common cause of Halitosis is Periodontal or Gum Disease. (Please read the following article on Periodontal Disease.) Simply, Periodontal Disease is not a laughing matter. So, if your dog's breath is sour, give our office a call to arrange for an appointment. Let us catch the causes of your pet's bad breath before problems develop.



PERIODONTAL DISEASE

We have all heard about plaque and tartar and their ill effects on our teeth. Chances are that you have heard of plaque and tartar for as long as you have been watching television. But what are plaque and tartar? Periodontal Disease starts with the formation of plaque and tartar on our teeth or on the teeth of our pets. Plaque and tartar form in stages:

- The formation of plaque begins within hours after the teeth are cleaned. The saliva in the mouth secretes a film of glycoproteins that coats the teeth.
- Bacteria in the mouth soon cling to this film and, within days, becomes mineralized plaque.
- As bacteria grow in the plaque and as calcium salts are deposited, plaque turns to tartar.
- If tartar is not removed from the teeth, pockets of pus may appear along the gum line and separate the teeth from the gum thus allowing more food and bacteria to accumulate.
- Without proper treatment, this plaque and tartar buildup may cause Periodontal Disease.

Like nearly all diseases and problems in life, if caught in its early stages, Periodontal Disease is very treatable. However, if left untreated in a pet's mouth, Periodontal Disease can lead to significant problems including tooth loss. Of particular danger, untreated Periodontal Disease supplies an unwanted "bank" of harmful bacteria that ultimately migrate and harm the vital organs of the body. Complications from problems affecting these organs can be fatal.

It is a good idea to occasionally look in your pet's mouth to check on the condition of his or her teeth and gums. Gently pull back your pet's lips and examine the upper canines and the upper-back molars. If the gums above the teeth are red and the teeth are covered with brownish plaque, your pet is probably suffering from Periodontal Disease.

Not surprisingly, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS) are spreading the word about the need for proper pet dental care.

It is a sad statistic that a huge percentage of dogs and cats over three years of age already have evidence of Periodontal Disease. The unwanted pain these pets suffer could be easily eliminated with proper dental treatment and regular home care. Please schedule a dental health checkup today. Your pet will be glad you did!



Cat Owners Dental Question: What is a Cervical Line Lesion?

Some people incorrectly call these "feline cavities". In fact, Cervical Line Lesions are a common dental problem affecting approximately 30% of cats. Many cats with loose teeth are diagnosed with Cervical Line Lesions. These pinpoint holes (almost like a cavity) develop in the teeth at the base of the gum line. The lesions collect bacteria that can eventually lead to other ailments like Periodontal Disease.

Unfortunately, the cause of Cervical Line Lesions is unknown. The best precaution is to prevent the accumulation of plaque deposits from forming. Limiting the amount of bacteria in the mouth limits the chances of Cervical Line Lesions forming. Of course, the best method of limiting bacteria and plaque formations is for your cat to be seen by the veterinarian regularly and for feline dental care to be practiced at home.

Please call our office if you have any questions about this important feline topic.

You Want Me To Brush My Pet's WHAT?

You heard us correctly when we said we wanted you to routinely brush your pet's teeth. Routine brushing is vital to your pet's long-term dental health. Additionally, once you make the commitment, it's really not that difficult. Here are a couple of tips:

- Begin your brushing program at an early age.
- Dip your index finger in beef stock for dogs or tuna water for cats and gently rub your finger over your pet's mouth and teeth. Keep your sessions short and stroke your pet to make it comfortable.
- Once you have accustomed your pet to the process, introduce a toothbrush and toothpaste designed for pets. Our staff will be happy to recommend the correct type. Do not use human toothpaste as it will cause stomach upset in animals. Of real help in this process, the toothpaste we provide is specially flavored for pets and they seem to like it.
- Small dogs and cats can be wrapped in a towel to restrain them during the brushing process. Large dogs can be initially wrapped in a blanket to restrain them. Be assured that once most pets become accustomed to the brushing sessions, the need to restrain them will diminish.

Please call our office if you have any specific questions about brushing your pet's teeth or if you need any supplies to get started.

QUICK DENTAL CHECK

It takes less than two or three minutes to check your pet's teeth for problems. Here is what to look for:

- Any swelling below the eyes. This could be the sign of an abscess.
- A foul smelling mouth. This odor may be a sign of Periodontal Disease.
- Presence of any fractured or loose teeth? A broken tooth with nerve exposure may result in infection.
- Brownish crust on teeth or red swollen gums. Another indication that Periodontal Disease may be present.

If you have any questions about the dental health of your pet, please give our office a call. We are here to help you.

DENTAL HEALTH TIDBITS

Chew on these facts:

- Periodontal Disease is more common in small breeds of dogs. Experts believe a small dogs' teeth are often too large for their mouths thus forcing the teeth closer together.
- Puppies are born with 28 temporary teeth that erupt at about three to four weeks of age. They have 42 permanent teeth that begin to emerge at about four months.
- Kittens have 26 temporary teeth that begin to erupt at about two to three weeks of age. They have 30 permanent teeth that begin to emerge at about four months.
- Broken teeth are a common problem with dogs. Aggressive chewing on hard objects such as commercially available cow hooves is thought to be a primary cause of broken teeth in dogs.