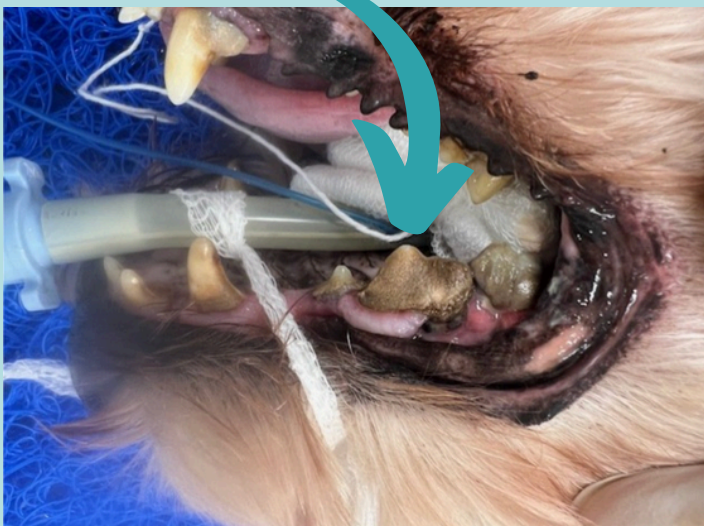




Dental disease in dogs

Most dental disease in dogs is caused by a film of bacteria which develops over the teeth and gums called plaque. This is not visible to the naked eye but over time it mineralises into chunks of brown/grey tartar.



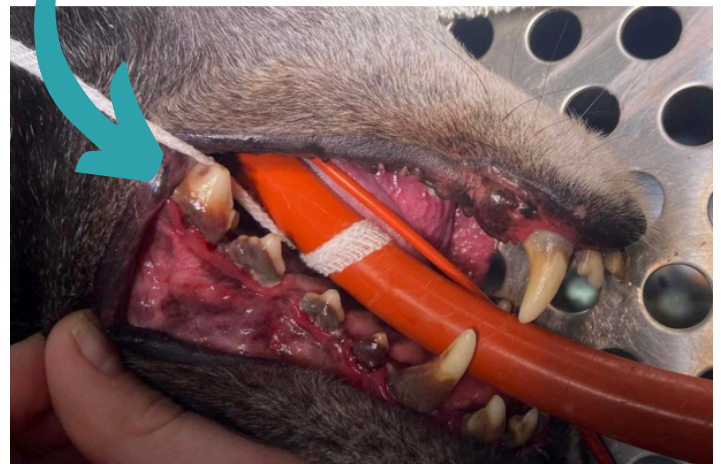
The continual presence of plaque and tartar results in gingivitis, which means inflammation of the gums. Swollen, red and sore gums attract increasing numbers of bacteria, resulting in the **gradual recession of the gums and eventually, the bone, as seen in the picture below.**

This is a progressive process resulting in exposure and infection of tooth roots, tooth loss, a potentially serious infection of the jawbone, bad breath and **most importantly pain.**

Dental disease can also have a significant impact on overall health, with constant exposure to bacteria and toxins from the mouth having adverse effects on organs including the kidneys, lungs, liver and heart.

The good news is that if we catch it early, this process can be halted and reversed. In mild cases, this may simply involve a home care regime, with regular tooth brushing.

If the process is already established, your pet will need a full dental assessment and treatment, including scale and polish, dental x-rays and extractions, if necessary, all performed under general anaesthetic.



Dental Procedure FAQ's

My pet is eating normally, surely, they can't be in pain?

Many of us know from our own experience that dental problems are very painful. However, pets don't generally show signs of mouth pain until it becomes unbearable. This is a defence mechanism inherited from their ancestors - if a dog or cat showed pain or weakness in the wild, it would risk having its dinner stolen by a pack member or becoming someone else's supper.

Do all dental procedures require a general anaesthetic?

Yes. A general anaesthetic is essential to enable us to effectively assess and treat the whole mouth and to protect your pet's airway during the procedure (we can't ask them to say ahh or swallow!)

Dental cleaning performed at home, by groomers or by other laypeople only removes tartar and plaque from the visible surfaces of some of the teeth. It cannot treat the real problem area that lies underneath the gum or access the entire mouth, as is possible under anaesthesia

What does a veterinary dental procedure involve?

We start by removing any tartar from the teeth, then probing and assessing each tooth for gingivitis, gum recession and pockets, mobility, damage or other problems, recording findings on a dental chart as we go.



Next, we take dental x-rays. This is an important step which allows us to evaluate the 70 % of each tooth that is hidden from view beneath the gum. Only then can we put this detailed information together and decide what, if any, teeth need to be removed.

Many of our pets' teeth have multiple roots which makes them especially tricky to remove, so extractions often involve cutting and suturing of the gum, splitting the tooth and drilling away some bone for better access.

Next, we use an ultrasonic scaler to meticulously remove all the plaque, including, most importantly, that which sits under the gum line and is responsible for gingivitis and periodontal disease. **Finally, we polish the teeth to make them shiny and white once again!**

What are the risks?

A general anaesthetic is never completely without risk, but it is important to realise that this risk is very small, even in older animals.

To put this into perspective, **the overall general anaesthetic risk for dogs is around 0.15% and 0.25% for cats, meaning that less than 2 in 1000 dogs and 3 in 1000 cats had any anaesthetic-related complications.**

We will discuss the specific risks that apply to your pet after examining them and will recommend a pre-anaesthetic blood test if they are older. We pride ourselves on our anaesthetic monitoring standards, with modern equipment and highly trained staff.

Please be assured, we only recommend dental work if we genuinely think it is in your pet's best interest.



You have recommended a dental, but my pet's teeth don't look that bad, should I book in now, or wait until it gets worse?

Dental disease is a progressive condition and, if detected and treated early with professional dental cleaning and a good home care regime, you could prevent your pet from needing expensive and painful extractions later.

