

# Dental Disease:

**Dental disease** is very common in cats. Most cats benefit from having their teeth cleaned yearly - usually starting when they are four or five years old.



*There are four main reasons for dental prophylaxis:*

- To keep the teeth and gums healthy - to prevent future tooth loss.
- To prevent or resolve pain from gingivitis, abscesses and tooth lesions.
- To prevent or resolve other effects of disease, such as loss of function
- To prevent dental infection from spreading to other parts of the body.

## **Anesthesia:**

Unfortunately, it is necessary to anesthetize cats in order to probe the gums, clean the inner surface of the teeth and to clean under the gum line (the most important part of the tooth to clean). To minimize the risks associated with anesthesia, we:

- Routinely examine all patients.
- Recommend preanesthetic blood tests and radiographs.
- Administer I.V. fluids.
- Use Isoflurane gas anesthesia.
- Monitor oxygen saturation
- Monitor blood pressure.



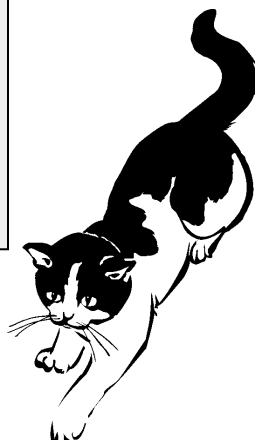
One of the biggest risks of anesthesia is the possibility that the patient's blood pressure will get too low. When this happens, unrecognized damage can be done to internal organs. To prevent this possibility, we give I.V. fluids during surgeries and dentals. We determine the fluid rate based on the measured blood pressure.

## **Pain:**

**Studies have shown that cats feel oral pain just like we do. But they don't complain.**

### **Broken teeth:**

When a tooth is broken, the pulp is usually exposed. This allows bacteria to get into the tooth. The resulting infection causes severe pain. These teeth should be extracted or have endodontic therapy at a dental referral practice.



### **Resorptive lesions:**

Cats often have resorptive lesions of their teeth. These are also called FORLs (feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions). These are holes in the teeth, similar to severe cavities. Although teeth with these lesions are very painful, most cats do not show any signs. When cats do show signs, the signs vary and may include: salivating, difficulty eating, strange tongue movements, head shaking, growling when eating or grooming, and jaw tremors. Whether a given cat is showing signs of pain or not, teeth with FORLs should be extracted.

### **Permission to extract:**

Until a given tooth is cleaned and then examined under anesthesia, we sometimes don't know if it will need to be extracted. I always try to ask permission to extract teeth if it is found to be needed – and I do this before the procedure. It just doesn't make sense to take the time to discuss extractions while the patient is under anesthesia.

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