

Dear Valued Client,

February is Dental Month in the veterinary profession. It is a time to focus on the importance of dental health and how it affects the general health of your pet. We are offering a discount on our dental services during February.

Here are some important things to think about:

- Besides using his or her teeth for eating and chewing, your pet's teeth are also fingers. This is how he picks things up and carries things.
- Even though pets are domesticated they still fall back to instinctive behavior. For example, they typically do not stop eating even in the presence of severe dental disease. This means they can be in pain without you knowing it.
- It has been proven that plaque and tartar (which are comprised of bacteria and mineral content) on the teeth, slowly and constantly release bacteria into your pet's bloodstream. These bacteria are then circulated to internal organs like the heart, kidneys, liver and lungs. Over time this causes organ damage.

When is the last time you looked in your pet's mouth? Go ahead, take a look. Are his teeth white and sparkling or yellow/grey? What about his gums? Are they nice and pink or red and inflamed? What about his breath? Most pets have dental disease by two to three years of age.

You no doubt have questions. I will try to address a few of them here:

Why does my pet need to go under general anesthesia for a dental cleaning?

Well, if you think about it, your pet is not going to lie back in the chair and allow us to clean, probe, x-ray and do all the things your dentist would do to you while awake. While risk always exists with general anesthesia we have ways of minimizing that risk including the use of pre-anesthetic blood work, ecg, etc. The benefit of good oral health, in most cases, outweighs the risk of general anesthesia.

Why does it cost so much just to clean teeth?

If your pet is young with fairly clean teeth we will be using a combination of hand scalers, and ultrasonic scalers to remove the plaque and tartar. This is done both above and below the gum line. Then the teeth are polished. Polishing the teeth removes any scratches or minor surface defects on the teeth giving them a smooth surface. The smooth surface makes it harder for new plaque and tartar to form. Finally, a thorough oral exam is performed looking for any pockets in the gums that indicate a problem.

The entire oral cavity is examined for any abnormalities. Your pet's dental health is charted as part of the medical record. Finally recommendations will be made for at-home oral care.

If your pet has more advanced dental disease the procedures become more complex and may include:

- Dental radiographs (x-rays) to determine the health of the tooth under the gum line. Cat and dog teeth have very large roots leaving a large portion of the tooth under the gum line where it cannot be evaluated without radiographs. Radiographs help determine if other therapies are indicated such as extraction or referral for restoration work.
- Gingival flapping- a flap made in the gum to get to tartar and plaque deep beneath the gum line.
- Removal of excess gum tissue.
- Tooth extraction.

How much is this going to cost?

This is a valid question and one that is difficult to answer. We make every effort to come up with accurate dental estimates. The problem is, a thorough oral exam cannot be done until your pet is under anesthesia. Until the oral exam is done it is difficult to know the exact extent of dental work needed.

We make an estimate that is as accurate as possible with the animal awake. Then we perform an oral exam with the pet under anesthesia and call you if there are any adjustments.

We understand things are financially difficult for many people right now especially with the post-holiday bills rolling in. We also know that oral health not only extends the life of pets but improves the quality of life of pets as well. During the month of February we are offering a 15% discount on all dental work. That means you will get 15% off your final invoice.

Please call our office with any questions or concerns or for more information on dental health. We will gladly set up a free pre-dental exam so we can get you as accurate an estimate as possible.

Thank you,

Dr . Steve and the Staff of Vetcetera.