



**Murray Bridge
Vet Clinic**

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Prevention of Dental Disease

What is Dental Disease

Your pet needs to have good oral hygiene to keep a healthy set of teeth and gums throughout its life. Research shows that by 2 years of age 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have some form of dental disease. Oral health problems often begin with a build up of plaque (a sticky film that is continually forming on the teeth). If left untreated plaque hardens to form a tartar, trapping bacteria and eventually leading to gingivitis (a painful condition of inflamed gums). The supporting structures of the tooth are damaged, which will ultimately lead to tooth loss.

The bacteria associated with dental tartar is responsible for bad breath and can enter a pet's blood stream and spread to the vital organs such as heart, liver and kidneys causing systemic disease.

Signs of dental disease

- Bad breath
- buildup of yellow-brown tartar
- bleeding gums
- pain when eating
- change of chewing/eating habits
- tooth loss
- subdued behaviour
- dribbling saliva.



The Four T's for Oral Maintenance

1. Tooth Brushing

Why? - Plaque develops on the teeth each day so by brushing, this daily accumulation of plaque is removed. This in turn reduces the chances of periodontal disease developing. Brushing teeth has been shown to be the most effective way of keeping plaque from building up on the tooth surface.

Tips for brushing your pet's teeth:

Start tooth brushing as early in life as you can. It is easiest to teach young animals to have their teeth brushed, and prevention is better than cure.

Make sure your pet is relaxed and comfortable (sitting on your lap, or being cuddled by another person).

Make the initial sessions brief and positive. Don't push the matter if your pet is getting upset. It often takes a few sessions for your pet to allow you to use a toothbrush and toothpaste on them without protest.

Start by using just your fingertips to rub along the teeth and gums. You can use a dab of tasty toothpaste to make it more acceptable.

Approach from the side and start with just a few teeth, gradually increasing the number of teeth as your pet gets used to it.

Move up to using a toothbrush or finger brush, which is needed to reach plaque hiding under the gum line.

Choose toothpaste designed for pets. Aside from the more appealing taste, pet toothpaste is much safer for regular use.

When introducing pet toothpaste, put a small amount on your finger and let your pet taste it. Then press the paste down into the bristles of the toothbrush so your pet can't just lick it off.

Offer a reward at the end of the procedure, such as a walk or game.

Have your pet's teeth examined regularly by your vet.



2. Tucker

The food you provide for your pet is very important in maintaining good oral health and hygiene. A diet of 80% - 100% dry food is ideal. **Wet food sticks to the surface of the tooth, getting stuck between the teeth and under the gum line.**

We recommend a combination of Hills t/d Kibble (teeth diet) and Hills Adult Dry

3. Treats

Treats play a big role in your pet's daily life. There are many different types available; the treats that assist in dental maintenance are:

Dental designed chews (eg. Greenies available at MB Vet Clinic)

Raw carrots

Dental treats may help prevent plaque build up on your pets teeth by removing food particles and increasing saliva production. Always supervise your pet when giving new treats and change them regularly to avoid boredom.

4. Toys

Items softer than teeth such as the Kong rubber toys, promote gingival health through chewing.



DENTAL GRADING

GRADE 1	<p>A: Plaque/tartar on caudal teeth only</p> <p>B: No Pockets, mild gingivitis (may not be grossly visible)</p> <p>C: Zero bone loss</p>		
GRADE 2	<p>A: Plaque/tartar extending over most of the teeth.</p> <p>B: Less than 25% attachment loss, no tooth mobility.</p> <p>C: Gingivitis</p>		
GRADE 3	<p>A: Tartar and calculus extend down into the gum line</p> <p>B: 25 – 50% attachment loss</p> <p>C: Extensive bone reduction</p> <p>D: Possible gum recession or mild tooth mobility.</p>		
GRADE 4	<p>A: Extensive tartar and calculus</p> <p>B: Severe inflammation</p> <p>C: > 50% attachment loss</p> <p>D: Severe bone and gum loss, probable tooth mobility</p>		



If you have any further questions please make an appointment with your Veterinarian or ask one of our friendly staff members.