

## Dental Health

It's a fact. Most owners never take a good look inside their pets' mouth. This is unfortunate because it is estimated that over 80 percent have significant dental disease. Every day veterinarians are presented with patients for routine vaccinations or other minor afflictions whose oral health status is truly cause for alarm.

The mouth is a warm, moist environment with significant nutrients present, and is therefore a perfect environment for all kinds of bacteria to flourish. Most are normal and natural but once plaque and calculus form on the teeth the normal microbial flora gets out of balance and nasty bacteria proliferate.

These bad bacteria produce toxins that spread through the blood stream and can affect the delicate tissues of the kidneys, liver, and brain. Far better than extracting teeth and performing complicated dental surgery would be to prevent the health damaging dental disease in the first place. This is easily achieved by regular dental checks and if necessary, a quick "scale and polish" of the teeth which can be performed as a day procedure at the clinic.

Prevention of dental disease can be best achieved by appropriate diets, chew toys that encourage the animal to "exercise" its teeth (rawhide chewies, hard rubber or nylon chew toys), and brushing the teeth regularly (very difficult in cats, not too bad in dogs). Daily tooth-brushing is recommended irrespective of dietary regime. Prevention is also achieved by paying closer attention to our pet's oral health status. And that begins with the simple task of looking closely at your pets' mouth.