

Recently Dr. Ayshea Quintana from the Arroyo Veterinary Center responded to some dental hygiene questions from Cynthia Cohen, one of our new fundraising team members. The answers are below in **bold**.

1. What kinds of animals do you recommend dental hygiene for? All animals? Just dogs and cats? Any other animals?

A physical examination of any animal under the care of a veterinarian should always include an examination of the mouth. Since veterinarians in general treat many species, any dental treatments and hygienic practices are at the recommendation of their respective veterinarian.

2. What age ranges do you recommend dental cleanings for? All age ranges? Does the animal have to be a certain age before getting a dental cleaning?

With regards to companion animals such as dogs and cats, this often depends on the species and breed. For example, toy breed dogs tend to develop dental disease at an earlier age compared to large breed dogs. Therefore, this can easily range from 2-4 years old for their first dental cleaning. They do not have to be a certain age before getting a dental cleaning as long as they can safely undergo a general anesthesia.

3. How often should an animal receive a dental cleaning? Is the official office visit once a year then home cleanings by the pet owner every month? Every week?

How often pets receive dental cleanings, again, very much depends on the species and breed. Some pets with severe periodontal disease come in twice a year while others may only need to come in once a year. I'm always thrilled if pet owners can manage to brush their pets teeth on their own. This greatly helps to reduce plaque accumulation but can often be a challenge for pet owners. In an ideal world, daily brushing would be fantastic but anything helps, even if it's just a few times a week.

4. Is the under anesthesia dental office visit safe for the animals? How long does the procedure last? What kinds of dental equipment are used?

There is always risk to any kind of anesthesia. Therefore, we take all possible precautions to make sure we minimize these risks. I cannot stress enough the importance of a good physical examination prior to anesthesia. From there, a veterinarian can recommend appropriate pre-anesthetic diagnostic screening such as labwork. Most dental prophylactic treatments last anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour but may take longer if significant dental disease is present. Full mouth digital dental radiographs are strongly recommended and is part of our standard of care. Many standard dental units contain an ultrasonic scaler, an air/water syringe, and hand pieces for polishing and drilling.

5. Should a pet owner clean their own pet's teeth by hand without anaesthesia? If so, what kinds of dental cleaning supplies should be used? Special toothbrushes and special toothpaste? Is regular human toothpaste or toothbrushes dangerous for animals?

At home care is part of good dental hygiene and maintenance for your pet. There are soft finger cups and soft tooth brushes for brushing your pets teeth. There are many commercial kits available. I never recommend using human toothpaste to brush your pets teeth as some of the ingredients can be harmful to animals. I recommend just plain water or an enzymatic toothpaste formulated for animals.

6. What are the possible/likely consequences if dogs/cats do not receive dental cleanings?

Developing severe dental disease is very unpleasant for animals. In addition to halitosis (bad breath), which clients often notice, it can be very painful especially if there is infection and fractured teeth. There is also evidence that significant dental disease in animals can lead to other systemic problems such as cardiac disease.

7. How much do office visit dental cleanings cost approximately? Price range?

This is quite variable depending on the age, health, and stage of dental disease, if present. I encourage people to see their veterinarian for cost estimates.

I hope this helps!

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