



**WATERLOO WEST ANIMAL HOSPITAL**

414 ERB ST. W.  
WATERLOO, ON, N2L 1W8  
519-747-2020

## February 2010 Newsletter

### BENEFITS OF DENTAL CARE

When it comes to keeping our pets and ourselves healthy, most people recognise the importance of nutrition and exercise, but many owners do not understand the implications of poor oral health for their pet. Studies show that 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats show signs of oral disease by age three.

Dental disease doesn't affect just the mouth. It can lead to more serious health problems including heart, lung and kidney disease, which makes it all the more important that you provide your pets with proper dental care from the start.

Neglecting your pet's oral health can lead to gingivitis, an early phase of gum disease which, if left untreated, can lead to periodontitis, a serious infection of the supporting structures of the teeth. Factors that contribute to dental disease include poor overall hygiene.

#### Helpful Tips for Better Oral Care

**1 *Get familiar with your pet's mouth***

- i) Take time to look into the dog or cat's mouth – this will help better identify problems or changes as they occur.

**2 *Talk to your Veterinarian***

- i) Regular veterinary visits should include a comprehensive dental check up. Talk to your veterinarian about any noted changes in a pet's mouth or behaviour.

**3 Look for warning signs of periodontal disease.**

- i) Any of the following symptoms could indicate a larger problem. Bad breath, Bleeding gums, Excessive salivation, Subdued behaviour, Tooth loss, Pawing at the mouth, Tartar build-up, Refusal to eat, Pain when eating, Change of eating habits.

**4 *Understand the cause of periodontal disease***

- i) The cause of periodontal disease is the same in dogs and cats as it is in humans. Gum disease is an infection resulting from build-up of soft dental plaque on the surfaces of the teeth around the gums. If plaque is allowed to accumulate, the bacteria irritate the gum tissue, which can often lead to infection in the bone surrounding the teeth.
- ii) Tartar starts to form within a few days on a tooth surface that is not kept clean. Tartar provides a rough surface that enhances further plaque accumulation. Once it has begun to grow in thickness, tartar is difficult to remove without dental instruments.

**5 *Practice good oral hygiene at home.***

- i) Brushing is the gold standard for oral health and should become part of a daily pet care routine. **ASK YOUR VETERINARY STAFF FOR A TOOTHBRUSH DEMO!**
- ii) Prevention is key when it comes to reducing the incidence of dental disease.