DENTAL DISEASE AND YOUR PET

Dental disease can affect our dogs and cats at any stage of life, but it is most common as our pets enter middle age. Studies at the Veterinary Colleges of Ohio State and Cornell University have found that 85% of dogs and cats over 6 years old have some form of dental disease.

Dental disease can be put into three categories: gingivitis, tartar and pyorrhea. Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums. You can easily see this by the increase in the pinkness of your pet's gums, especially at the gumline. Tartar is the accumulation of plaque on the teeth, usually starting at the gumline in conjunction with gingivitis. Pyorrhea is the most serious of the three conditions. It is pus in the mouth, usually between teeth and gums.

All three of these conditions require treatment. Therapy can range from antibiotics to anesthesia, and a complete dental scaling and polishing. The appropriate type of treatment is decided upon after oral examination. We treat these conditions because they are actual infections. Dental disease can lead to heart, lung, liver, kidney, skin and prostate infections.

All of these conditions are caused by one of two reasons. The first reason is feeding canned or soft foods. These foods give little to no benefits to the teeth and gums because they require little to no chewing. The second reason is genetics. As with our teeth - some people get cavities or excessive tartar due to genetics - some animals have more dental problems than others due to genetics. Since we cannot change our genetics, dry food and hard biscuits are our recommendations.

So the next time you complain of dog breath or cat breath, look into your pet's mouth and then call us for an examination. Let's cure any problems and prevent more serious ones before they start.