



Teeth Cleaning:COHAT

Although cleaning the teeth is certainly a part of the dental care we provide, we prefer to use the more descriptive term **COHAT**. What does that mean?

C= Comprehensive

O=Oral

H=Health

A=Assessment and

T=Treatment

Why COHAT? To safely and fully evaluate all tooth surfaces, and below the gum line, our patients need to be anesthetized. It is important to perform a complete oral examination to fully diagnose dental conditions and perform proper treatment. There may be several different stages of periodontal disease or other oral conditions present in one patient.

What does a COHAT include? Your pet will undergo a *pre-anesthetic physical examination*, and a blood profile will be evaluated to monitor blood cell counts and organ function.

Once this has been reviewed, an *anesthetic plan* is formulated for the pet. An intravenous (I.V.) catheter is placed for I.V. fluids and anesthetic drugs. *General anesthesia* is induced, and your pet is set up in our dental suite with *anesthetic monitors* for pulse oximetry, blood pressure, and respiratory rate among other parameters. A warming blanket is placed around the pet, and a veterinary assistant monitors the vital signs and anesthetic level.

THEN, we are ready to *examine and treat* your pet's oral condition:

- Each tooth is examined, and a periodontal probe is used to check for pockets. The gum tissue is examined for inflammation.
- The crowns of the teeth are cleaned with hand and ultrasonic instruments to remove plaque and tartar.
- An ultrasonic *scaler* or hand instruments are then used under the gums which are the most critical part of treating periodontal disease.
- Dental radiographs are taken to evaluate the bone and roots beneath the gum line.
- Any teeth with periodontal disease are treated (*see periodontal surgery and treatment*) or extracted (*see oral surgery and extractions*).

If no further treatment is needed, then the teeth are *polished*. After drying, *OraVet*, a plaque preventive treatment is put on the teeth to help keep plaque from sticking to the teeth.



Frequently Asked Questions:

Are there any treats or chews that can help keep my pet's teeth clean?

There are many products marketed to “reduce plaque and tartar buildup” or “keep teeth clean”. The problem is that many of these products have no research to back their claims up with proof! How do we decide what is a good treat or chew to help keep dog and cat teeth clean? Luckily, we have the Veterinary Oral Health Council who has made it their job to review the claims products make and based on the information available, decide if their claims are true. If a product has received the VOHC seal of approval, then it has been documented to prevent plaque or dental calculus accumulation. The full list of products give the VOHC seal can be seen at their website (www.VOHC.org).

In general, toys should be slightly flexible, or soft enough to imprint your thumbnail in the side. If a toy is rock hard, it will be more likely to break a tooth (see our Endodontic Therapy page for more information). Examples of toys that are likely to break teeth or cause other problems include: animal bones, tennis balls, cow or pig hooves, compressed rawhides, Nylabones for “hard chewers”, and antlers. Certain dogs may chew rawhide strips and receive benefit from them- but make sure that your pet does not swallow large pieces of these treats in one gulp!

There are certain diets, treats, and chews that have been specifically formulated for dental health. However, none of them replace the benefits obtained by daily brushing. The best dental care you can provide your pet is to brush their teeth on a daily basis. For tips on brushing, see our *Oral Home Care* handout.

Why don't we know exactly what will be done to my pet's mouth prior to anesthesia?

Seventy percent of the tooth is located under the gumline – this means that we can't detect what is going on with 70% of the tooth until we can take dental x-rays and probe under the gumline. In addition, there are areas around the teeth, behind the tongue and in the back of the mouth that can only be visualized under anesthesia. For these reasons, we cannot completely diagnose what is going on in the mouth on an awake patient. This means that we can give you our best estimate of what disease is present and the best therapy to make them healthy again after your pet's consultation, but we cannot know for sure until they are asleep and we can use our dental x-rays and oral examination to confirm

the best treatment plan for your pet. Many different stages and types of dental disease can be present in the same patient at the same time!

How much will the treatment cost?

Because periodontal disease happens at and below the gumline, we cannot be sure what will be necessary in order to fully treat your pet until they are under anesthesia. This means that while we will do our best to provide an accurate estimate for treatment at your consultation, we may be making the final decision and cost estimate while your pet is asleep. For these reasons, and because each patient is so different, we cannot give an estimate until we have fully examined your pet at the consultation.

How long will this take?

The majority of our patients are under anesthesia for less than 2 hours. We make all attempts to keep anesthesia under four hours depending on the extent of therapy needed to treat your pet. We can give you a much better estimate of both cost and time for treatment after we have evaluated your pet at their consultation.