

# Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

## Feb. 2019

### Welcome

Hope everyone made it through the polar vortex okay! February is "Pet dental health month", so for this newsletter, we are going to discuss some tips for caring for your pets teeth. We will also give some tips on Valentine's Day treats your pet should avoid. If you have any questions or comments or have a topic you would like to hear about please contact our staff at 630-365-9599 or you can contact us via email: [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net)

In addition to gingivitis and periodontal disease, there are some less commonly seen dental conditions that owners should be aware of, such as tooth fractures, tooth root abscess, and cavities.



### Retained deciduous teeth

Just like humans, dogs have deciduous teeth, or baby teeth. Ordinarily the baby teeth are shed when the dog is between four and six months old, allowing the permanent teeth to come in. However, in some dogs, the deciduous teeth are retained and do not fall out normally. Unfortunately, retained baby teeth are quite common in some dogs, especially in small breeds such as Pomeranians, Yorkies, and poodles. If baby teeth are left in, they can cause overcrowding, and overcrowded teeth can predispose your dog to developing periodontal disease and other bite issues. Dogs with overcrowded

teeth often develop doggy breath and localized gingivitis caused by bacteria that readily gather and grow between the teeth. In addition, look out for permanent teeth that have come through as crooked or double rows of teeth, and bleeding, reddened gums around some of the baby teeth.

### Tooth fractures

Along with periodontal disease, broken or cracked teeth are a common dental problem in pet dogs.

The crown of the tooth comprises three separate parts: enamel, dentin, and pulp.

The tooth enamel forms a hard outer layer, protecting the other structures within the tooth. Dentin lies directly beneath the enamel tooth shell and consists of tubules with nerve endings that radiate outward from the tooth pulp. The pulp itself is a highly sensitive area of living tissue, which contains nerves and blood vessels.

Any form of trauma can damage the tooth; clashing teeth with another dog while playing, chewing on very hard bones or rocks, chewing on the bars of a kennel are all common causes of tooth damage. If the outer enamel is cracked and the pulp exposed, your dog will suffer extreme pain, and urgent veterinary treatment is always required.

It's not always easy for owners to recognize that their dog has a broken tooth. Sometimes purple, gray, or pink staining on the tooth surface will indicate that the tooth pulp has bled, causing the dentin to become stained. Black spots on the surface of the tooth indicate that the pulp is actually bleeding. Your dog can appear miserable and sensitive around the mouth, and he may be reluctant to eat or struggle to chew his food. Your vet will make a definitive diagnosis of a tooth

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fracture by taking dental radiographs and probing the tooth (under general anesthesia) to establish whether the pulp cavity has been exposed.

There are two primary treatment options, extraction and root canal. (Dr. Cechner does not do specialty dental procedures such as root canals; she does do dental cleanings and extractions)

### **Tooth root abscess**

A tooth root abscess is a severe infection around the base of a tooth root, usually following damage or trauma to the tooth. Bacteria enter the injury site, attacking the tissue and causing inflammation and pain. Tooth root abscesses can also occur as a complication of periodontal disease.

Your dog may have difficulty eating and may begin tipping his head to one side in an attempt to avoid the pain caused by the abscess. As the abscess grows facial swelling may appear, often around the eye, depending on the proximity of the tooth roots. If your dog will allow you to look inside his mouth, you may see a swelling or red, angry looking area of the gum.

The vet will prescribe antibiotics to control the infection, together with analgesics and/or anti-inflammatory drugs to make your dog more comfortable. Treatment will involve either root canal therapy or extraction of the affected tooth root if the surrounding structures are too severely damaged to be saved.



### **Cavities**

Similar to people, dogs can develop cavities in their teeth. Cavities most commonly occur in the flat molar teeth at the back of the dog's mouth, and are caused by tooth decay. Cavities can occur as a complication of long standing periodontal disease or following trauma where the tooth surface has sustained damage. All breeds can be affected.

As it is mainly teeth at the back of the dog's mouth that develop cavities, it is difficult for owners to realize that there is a problem. The early signs to look out for include the following:

Foul breath

Tooth discoloration

Behavioral changes such as reluctance to eat or sensitivity around the mouth

If your dog shows any of these signs, consult your vet. Sometimes the only way to diagnose this is to do an exam under anesthetic.

When the condition has been left undetected for a long period of time and advanced lesions have developed, root canal treatment or extraction will be required.

However where decay is superficial, it may be possible to fill or cap the tooth in order to save it.

You can prevent your dog from tooth decay by brushing his teeth every day and having his oral health checked regularly by your vet. Also, a proper diet is critically important because cavities are caused by excess carbohydrates.

### **Orthodontic problems**

A dog should be able to close his mouth without any tooth causing damage or trauma to the adjacent tissues or teeth. Dogs have a "scissor bite," where the lower incisor teeth bite just behind the upper ones. In most breeds, the lower row

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of canine teeth occludes between the corner incisor and the upper canine, and the pre molars interlock.

In severe cases, tooth extraction may be the only option, but it is preferable not to do this, as it can complicate matters if the teeth are healthy. The aim of the specialist dental vet is to move the dog's teeth to a comfortable, functional position. Orthodontic treatment can sometimes involve fitting a brace to the teeth to move them into a more correct and comfortable position.

In pedigree dogs, your vet will probably recommend neutering so that the genetic dental occlusal problems are not passed on to the animal's offspring.

### Canine dental problems

- 1) Many canine dental problems are caused by canine periodontal disease
- 2) Look out for warning signs of dental problems in your pet including foul breath, eating difficulties, drooling, and pain.

Consult your vet right away if you think your dog has dental problems.

### 5 dangerous Valentine's Day treats your pet should avoid

Chocolate - It may be tempting, but it is a definite no - no for your dog. Chocolate not only contains harmful caffeine, but it also contains theobromine and theophylline, both which are toxic and can be deadly. Signs of toxicity include panting, vomiting, diarrhea, and potential damage to your dog's heart and nervous systems.

Candy - Candy contains mostly sugar which is not suitable for dogs. Some treats can also contain xylitol. Small amounts of xylitol can be deadly and lead to over release of insulin, kidney failure, or worse.

Gelatin, food dyes, and other artificial ingredients are not suitable for humans and dogs alike.

Sugar - This applies to any foods containing sugar, in addition to candy, like cookies, icing, ice cream, etc. Corn syrup is another culprit. If your dog overdoes it on sugar regularly it can lead to diabetes, obesity, and dental issues

Macadamia nuts and raisins - These can be found in many different baked goods, such as cookies or sweet breads. Macadamia nuts in particular, contain a toxin that inhibits locomotory activities. This can result in weakness, panting, swollen limbs, and tremors. Other possible damaging effects include damage to your dog's digestive, nervous, and muscular systems. Raisins contain a toxin that can cause severe liver damage and kidney failure.

Alcohol and milk - Alcohol causes lack of coordination, poor breathing, and abnormal stomach acidity. In larger quantities, alcohol may even result in coma or death. Small doses of milk aren't going to kill your dog, but some dogs are lactose intolerant meaning they don't have enough of the lactase enzyme to digest dairy rich foods. As a result you can get some smelly gas and nasty cases of diarrhea.

### Pet safe Valentine's Day treats

Try treating your pet this Valentine's Day to some organic homemade treats.

<https://www.caninejournal.com/organic-dog-treats/>



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