

# DOES YOUR PET HAVE BAD BREATH? THE IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL HEALTH

Unfortunately, most pets have bad breath, and this is not normal. The foul odor you smell is caused by an infection in their mouth. The most common cause of infection in your pet's mouth is periodontal disease, which affects over 75% of pets over 2 years of age. Periodontal disease is a progressive and irreversible loss of the structures surrounding the teeth caused by chronic infection and inflammation in the mouth. When your pet eats, residual food particles in the mouth promote growth of bacteria. The bacteria form a slime layer, known as plaque, which attaches to the teeth and hardens to form tartar and calculus.



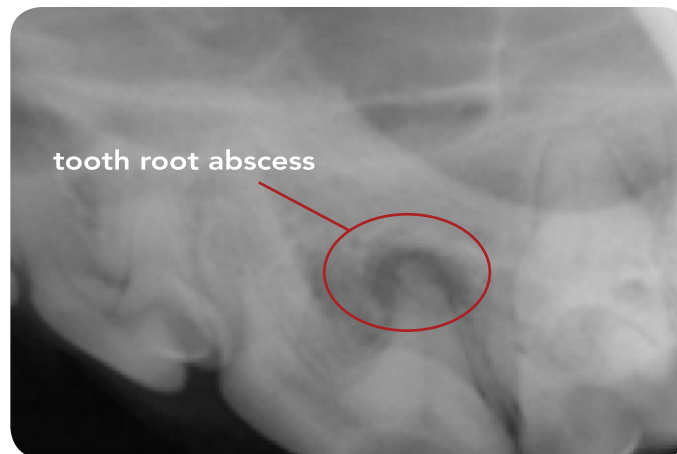
Early treatment is best to prevent pain, tooth loss and expensive treatments. Left untreated, periodontal disease may lead to:

- Chronic pain from infection and inflammation
- Decreased quality of life
- Decreased appetite and weight loss
- Tooth loss due to loss of supporting tissues around teeth
- Distant organ (e.g.: liver, kidneys, heart valves) damage from bacteria showering from the mouth to the bloodstream
- Adverse behaviors caused by pain



Healthy periodontal tissue is free of infection, inflammation and odor. Keeping the mouth healthy requires a combination of:

- Developing a home dental care plan that works for you and your pet
- Annual to bi-annual examinations by your veterinarian to evaluate the home dental care plan
- Annual professional teeth cleaning. Some breeds (e.g.: small breeds) may require more frequent cleanings. Just as people need their teeth cleaned regularly, your pet does too
- Daily brushing with pet toothpaste (do not use toothpaste made for people)
- Dental formulated diets, water additives and dental chews



The first step in treating periodontal disease requires cleaning the teeth and surrounding tissues. Because your pet will not lie down quietly for a dental cleaning, general

anesthesia is required. To prepare anesthesia, we will do a thorough examination of your pet, perform blood work and discuss the procedure with you. Your pet will be monitored closely throughout the entire procedure: your pet's safety is our primary concern. After the teeth are cleaned, X-rays will be taken of the teeth to check for pathology hiding below the gum line. We will discuss with you any other procedures that may need to be performed.

## Brushing Your Feline's Teeth

Every cat needs clean, sharp teeth and healthy gums. Damage to the tongue, teeth, palate and gums can lead to many health risks for cats, but these can be prevented with regular veterinary examinations and good old-fashioned tooth-brushing.

## Brushing Your Canine's Teeth

Equally important to annual dental exams at your veterinarian's practice is home dental care, including brushing your dog's teeth every day if possible. This is much easier if you begin brushing their teeth from a young age.



 **YouTube**  
bit.ly/mlahyoutube

Visit our YouTube Channel for an instructional video by our very own Dr. Karen Hoffman!

