

# Ridgewood Veterinary Hospital

## Why Dentistry?

Most people are not aware that pets need dental care as much as we do. The structure of their teeth is very similar to our own, and regular professional care is important since few pets allow brushing at home.

Dogs and cats are as susceptible as people to developing periodontal disease. Feeding dry dog foods and hard treats such as milkbones may help, but without regular cleaning, dental tartar can build up and cause all the pain and discomfort we associate with gum disease. The gums can recede and expose the roots of the teeth, which can become infected. Teeth can become loose, and then fall out or need to be extracted prematurely. Infected teeth and gums can spread bacteria throughout the body, via the blood, to organs such as the liver, heart, and kidneys, with potentially fatal results.

Each animal builds tartar at a different rate, but they all seem to do so in regular cycles, and at a fairly constant speed, much like people do. Just as some people need to get their teeth cleaned every six months and some once in three years, each animal has its own schedule for needing dental care. With the same equipment used by dentists on human teeth, we ultrasonically clean plaque and tartar from pets' teeth on a regular schedule that is determined individually for each animal. A barrier sealant can also be applied to retard plaque growth.

Once your pet's teeth are clean, home dental care is important. Brushing your pet's teeth is as vital to preventative dental care as it is to yours. For those pets whose teeth are difficult to brush, a new plaque prevention system is now available. After the barrier sealant is applied during the dentistry, owners only have to apply the plaque prevention gel once a week by sweeping the upper and lower gums with an applicator or their finger. Proper nutrition is also important. Pets should eat a well-balanced pet food appropriate to their health needs. We may even be able to recommend a diet, which is specifically designed to improve dental health.

We at the RIDGEWOOD VETERINARY HOSPITAL strongly recommend regular dental care for all pets. Most of us have experienced the discomfort of dental disease and would like to do all we can to prevent our pets from going through the same pain. Please give our office a call to schedule your pet's dental exam.