

The importance of good prophylactic dental care for dogs and cats cannot be overstressed.□

It has long been recognized that infected gums do much more harm than just cause bad breath. It has been accurately known since way before my graduation from Auburn vet school in 1973 that chronic infections from anal gland sacks and teeth are the main causes of heart and kidney problems in our pets. Very few of us would tolerate what we put our pets through with the chronic infections we allow in their mouths. If we had to eat, drink water, etc. with the amount of receding gums to sensitive dental tissue I guarantee the suicide rate would be higher. There are a few things worse than dental pain from which very little relief is available.

Years ago I had a root canal which was not successful. Every time the dentist would seal the tooth in a few days the pain would be unbearable due to the pressure of infection (puss) build-up in my infected tooth. It did not seem to matter what antibiotic I was put on or what he did, the outcome was the same, pain. I finally asked the dentist, "can we not pull the tooth? I do not think dealing with this infection is good for me." He explained the migrating of the teeth problem and I emphasized heart and kidney problems. The tooth was pulled, my pain stopped, and now I happily look like a Tennessee hillbilly if I smile real big.

The above story was simply to emphasize the pain your friend may be going through daily with his teeth, not to mention the damage to his body from infections. How do we prevent this condition? After a good dental is done we have learned it is always best to send home antibiotics to prevent the increased infection risk, especially to heart and kidneys. I have learned that I am unable to predict which mild cases do not need to be followed with antibiotics, so all go home with antibiotics. They usually pick amoxicillin or clindamycin. Then it is best to follow with products like Petzlife or Vetzlife to prevent the reoccurrence of the plaque which is caused by a bacterial infection. There are vitamins and supplements that also help with gingivitis and plaque formation.

A diet of good food high in antioxidants with a natural resistive consistency like raw meat and bones greatly helps the teeth to stay clean.

Daily brushing is of course a great plan for both you and your pet. A long-time client, John, is very proud of the fact that his little poodle friend, now nine years old, has never needed a dental due to his daily raw chicken wing diet. After many years of recommending calcium citrate to combat arthritis in dogs I noticed that we were not doing as many dentals. I had a client who

was a runner who was complaining about the pain she was suffering in her knees as she had aged. I told her about what the calcium citrate had done for the dogs and recommended she try it. She came back months later pointing her finger at me saying that it did help her knees, but the amazing change was her dental health. Her dentist wanted to know what on earth she was doing different. I then started to observe the teeth on all the older dogs which normally need dentals that I had put on calcium citrate for arthritis and saw that many of them did not now need dentals.

At Franklin Road Animal Hospital we do not like to run the risk of general anesthesia for dentals. We therefore heavily sedate, and scale and polish, and do not use ultrasonic teeth cleaners. In 1974 I inscribed a word on a stainless steel surgical table with an ultrasonic cleaner and wondered what did that instrument do to the enamel of a tooth. We sometimes, in very old, sweet dogs, will not use any anesthesia, but do dentally what they will allow and regroup in a week or so to attack the enemy plaque again until we have a pleasing mouth. Again, I want to emphasize, the real problem is kidney and heart infections, not bad breath, which is though a tell-tale sign of need.