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

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 with anesthetic monitors for pulse oximetry, blood pressure, end ECG monitoring. A warming blanket is placed around the pet, and a veterinary technician 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 the periodontal probe is used to check for pockets. The gum tissue is examined for inflammation.
- Dental radiographs (xrays) are performed to identify root infections and bone loss around roots, and any teeth with diseased roots are extracted.
- The crowns of the teeth are cleaned with hand and ultrasonic instruments to remove plaque and tarter.
- An ultrasonic scaler or hand instruments are the used under the gums which are the most critical part of treating periodontal disease.
- Any teeth with periodontal disease are treated.

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 tarter 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 claim 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. Examples of toys that are likely to break teeth or cause other problems include: animal bones, tennis balls, cow or pig hooves, compressed rawhide, Nylabones for "hard chewers," and antlers.

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.

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 gum line – this means that we can't detect what is going on with 70% of the tooth until we probe under the gum line and radiograph the teeth. 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 in 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 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 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 3 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.

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