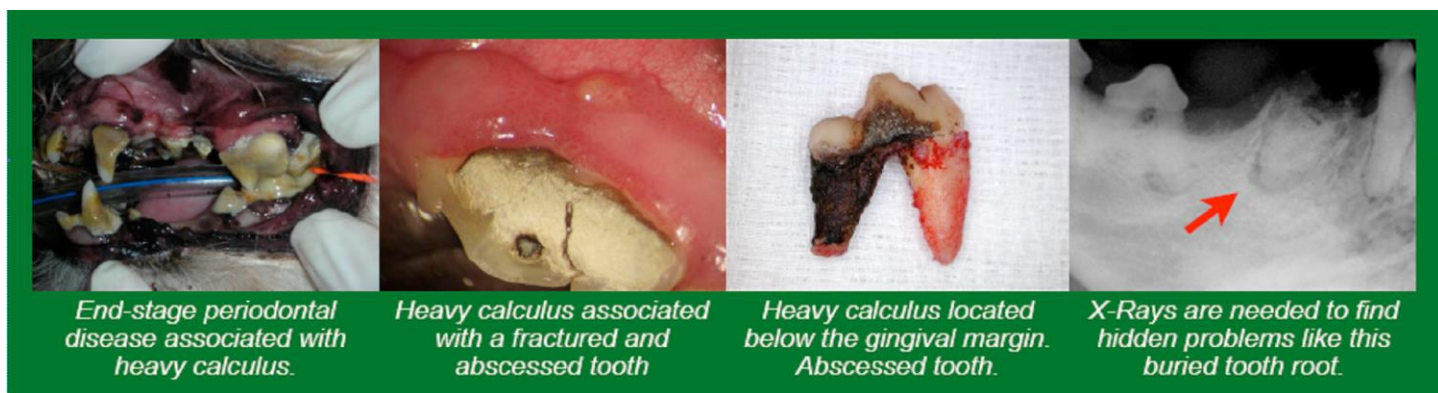


Anesthesia-Free Dental Cleaning: What You Need to Know!



Periodontal disease is the most common ailment of dogs and cats. Regular home care and professional treatment are the first and best means of preventing and combating this problem.

Anesthesia-free methods **DO NOT** provide the opportunity for thorough cleaning or for proper examination of the oral cavity. Pet owners who rely on anesthesia-free dentistry are leaving a smoldering problem that may well cause chronic pain and become manageable only by extraction.

Questions to Ask:

Whether or not anesthesia is used, when you consider having your pet's teeth cleaned, ask these questions of the provider:

Will you clean all sides of every tooth?

Will you clean below the gingival margin (gum line) as well as above it?

Will you probe around each tooth to find any areas of attachment loss?

Will you take dental x-rays of any areas that have pocketing, loose, missing, discolored or fractured teeth?

If the answer to any of these questions isn't "Yes," look elsewhere for your pet's dental care.

In addition, ask who will be doing your pet's dental cleaning. What are their qualifications? How will the doctor be involved? Who will do the oral examination? If someone other than the doctor is involved, is this person an employee? Who is responsible if there is a problem? If extractions are needed, who will do this?

What About Anesthesia Risks?

No one should pretend that anesthesia doesn't entail some risk. Fortunately, today these risks are very low for healthy animals, even those of advanced age. Underlying medical conditions may increase the risks associated with anesthesia. You should discuss these issues with your veterinarian, along with his or her plans to minimize risk.

Things to Remember:

Periodontal disease is the most common disease of dogs and cats. It is caused by infection below the gingival margin (gum line). It has little to do with the calculus (tartar) that is seen on the crowns of the teeth. Just removing calculus from the crowns does nothing to address periodontal disease and it creates a false sense of security.

Signs of Periodontal Disease:

Calculus: While not the primary problem, calculus may accumulate at an abnormally high rate when an animal is not chewing its food normally. This often indicates underlying dental disease.

Halitosis: Probably the most common sign of periodontal disease, halitosis is caused by the associated bacteria and decomposing periodontal tissue.

Gingivitis: Inflammation or redness of the gingiva indicates the presence of periodontal disease. It is important to intervene early if gingivitis is present.

Loose Teeth: When teeth loosen, it often indicates end-stage periodontal disease.