

# Cooroora Veterinary Clinic

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Veterinary Surgeons

## Dental Disease in Dogs & Cats

Dental disease in dogs and cats is typically seen as an accumulation of plaque and/or tartar with/without gum inflammation (gingivitis).

### 1. Plaque and Tartar

Plaque accumulates after eating on the sides of teeth, this is why we brush our teeth after eating (brushing removes the plaque). Plaque is a combination of minerals and salts from the saliva, food and bacteria. Once plaque begins to accumulate, continued oral secretions compounds the plaque build up. Soon there is a visible yellow-grey appearance to the teeth and 'furry' feel as the plaque calcifies and tartar forms.

### 2. Bad Breath (Halitosis)

Bacteria grow profusely in plaque and tartar. The tartar predisposes gum recession and bacterial colonies grow between the teeth and along the gum margin. The bacteria contribute to bad breath and may predispose tonsillar/laryngeal and stomach infections as they are swallowed. In severe cases the glands under the neck (lymph nodes) will become swollen. Antibiotics are often necessary to minimise the oral infection before, during and after the teeth are cleaned.

### 3. Gingivitis

Gingivitis is the inflammation (redness, swelling, pain) and infection of the gums. Inflamed/infected gums recede rapidly, exposing the tooth roots (exposed tooth roots are painful and prone to infection). Exposed/infected tooth roots can interfere with eating and as the gums recede the teeth can become loose and fall out.

**The removal of plaque and tartar is generally undertaken by your veterinarian using an ultrasonic scaling unit (under a general anaesthetic). This procedure involves a day stay in hospital and any teeth with exposed/infected roots are removed during this procedure.**



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## 4. What can you do?

Following an anaesthetic, dental scale and polish please consider the following:

- If teeth have been removed, do not to feed food that might get stuck in the sutures or sockets.... avoid hard or canned food for 7-10 days. Chopped raw meat (cubed or strips) is better.
- Try to encourage BJ Kaneto Alpha to chew to aide in keeping his/her teeth clean: Strips of raw meat, specifically designed dry food (Hills T/D or Royal Canin), raw chicken necks/wings and raw bones all help keep teeth cleaner.... NEVER FEED COOKED BONES
- Tooth brushes and tooth paste are available for pets (specifically designed to accommodate their inability to rinse after brushing). Cleaning their teeth three or four (or more) times a week will greatly assist in reducing the plaque accumulation.
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