

Happy Tails Vet Newsletter

DENTAL DISEASE YES... DOGS AND CATS GET IT TOO!



Dental Disease is not always obvious to you or your pet however it is a very common problem for our pets including even our "pocket pets" such as rabbits and guinea pigs. Dental disease is a major cause of ill health and discomfort with an estimated 80% of dogs and cats over 3 years of age being affected.

Dental disease starts with the build up of plaque (a colorless film on the surface of the tooth) which is then mineralized into a hard brown or yellow tartar (calculus). Plaque builds up as the result of poor oral hygiene. This tartar traps bacteria, food particles and even hair. Gingivitis (red inflamed gums) develops and then as the disease progresses, bacteria and inflammation attack and destroy the ligaments (periodontal disease) and even the bone supporting the tooth.

Once significant periodontal disease has occurred and the tooth is diseased, weak and loose, the only option is to have the tooth extracted. Dental disease not only causes immediate dental and oral problems, it is also associated with pain, inappetence, fractures of the jaw bone, heart disease, lung disease and kidney disease.

SIGNS OF DENTAL DISEASE INCLUDE:

- halitosis (bad breath)
- discolouration of the teeth
- red line around the gums
- tartar build up
- broken, worn or loose teeth
- inappetence, reluctance to chew, difficulty eating, or pain when chewing
- pawing or rubbing at the mouth
- increased salivation and drooling (possibly with some blood)

However do not despair, not all is lost! There are many simple ways to prevent or reduce dental disease with home care. Remember to check your pet's teeth & gums regularly and have the vet check your pet's mouth if you have any concerns.

Just as we brush our teeth daily, the gold standard in pet dental care is to brush their teeth daily using small, gentle, specially designed toothbrushes and pet tooth paste (human tooth paste is not recommended for our pets). It is best to start brushing your pet's teeth when they are young to encourage them to become used to the process. This also allows you to check the mouth thoroughly. There is also special dental gel available that can help reduce bacteria and plaque build up.

If your pet is not keen on having their teeth brushed or a dental gel (eg. Maxigard) applied then feeding appropriate dental chews regularly helps to mechanically clean the teeth as they chew on them. Greenies, Dentabones, pig's ears, rawhide chews, dental rope toys and Kongs are examples of dental chews that are fun as well as helpful.

Dental diets such as Hills T/D and Oral Care, Advance Dental and Royal Canin Dental are all balanced premium diets that aim to maintain good oral hygiene and reduce dental disease. Pet mouthwashes and water supplements may also be used to maintain healthy gums and some even help to reduce the number of bacteria in the mouth.

Feeding bones is a bit of a controversial topic and bones are not suitable for *all* dogs and cats. Feeding an appropriate sized fresh raw meaty bone 2-3 times weekly when supervised may be of benefit. Never feed cooked or very fatty bones. It is best to chat with your vet and discuss if feeding bones is suitable for your pet. Even chewing on fresh fruit and veges such as apple, carrot sticks and cauliflower can help reduce the accumulation of dental deposits.

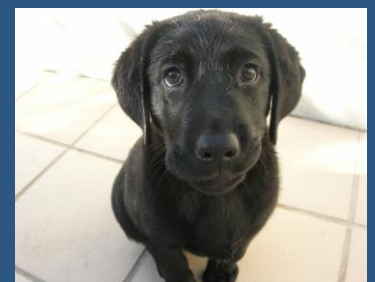
Despite all of our best efforts many pets will need dental work at some time in their lives. It is best to have this done as soon as indicated as delay may only lead to pain, further dental decline, tooth extractions and possibly other body disease complications. A thorough dental examination and ultrasonic scale and polishing of teeth is done under general anaesthesia.

Extractions are often required when the tooth cannot be saved. The vet may also recommend having retained or crowded teeth removed to prevent the likelihood of these teeth becoming diseased in the future.

Remember plaque and bacteria quickly buildup even following veterinary attention, so as soon as the vet recommends, re-start home dental care following a dental clean.

HAPPY TAILS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

140 Great North Road
Five Dock, NSW 2046
Ph: 02 8753 1300
www.happytails-vet.com



CELEBRATING **HAPPY TAILS VET'S** ACHIEVEMENTS!



FERRAGOSTO 2009 Five Dock Street Festival represents a special day for Happy Tails Veterinary Hospital. This year it marked our **2 YEAR BIRTHDAY!**

To celebrate both occasions the team at Happy Tails put on a fabulous Wildlife Show for all the locals and children. Many got to touch and hold baby crocodiles, lizards and even snakes! It was a fun filled day and we were sad to see it end!

Over the last 2 years Happy Tails Veterinary Hospital has worked hard to constantly improve and increase its services. We now have an acupuncture specialist on site and have increased our orthopaedic surgeries and laboratory testing on offer.

Our VIP Boarding has recently expanded to include optional Pet exercise and training with a qualified trainer and we now offer Pet Manners Classes for our older puppies.

Happy Tails Veterinary Hospital is proud to announce that since its opening in 2007 we have been awarded with multiple business awards. Our recent achievement being state finalist in the **NSW/ACT CHAMPION BUSINESS AWARDS.**

Happy Tails is proud of all the vets and nurses on our team who have worked hard to ensure our veterinary and pet services remain of a high quality .

We would like to say a BIG thank all our clients who nominated and voted for us!

After an amazing year, Happy Tails was excited to end 2009 with our infamous **Pet Santa Photos** in December. It was a huge success and we enjoyed seeing many of our favourite patients dressed up in their festive gear for their photo with our Santa!

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Open 7 days a week
Mon- Fri 8am-8pm
Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 10am-2pm

140 Great North Rd
Five Dock, NSW 2046
(02) 8753 1300

WINNER!!

2008 Small Business Awards

FINALIST!!

2008 True Local Business Awards

FINALIST!!

2009 NSW/ACT Champion
Business Awards

SERVICES OFFERED AT HAPPY TAILS VETERINARY HOSPITAL :

- ❖ Veterinary Consultation
- ❖ Specialised Nutritional Advice and Foods
- ❖ Soft Tissue and Orthopaedic Surgery
- ❖ Vaccinations and Microchip Implantation
- ❖ Acupuncture
- ❖ X-ray Imaging
- ❖ Ultrasound Imaging
- ❖ In house Laboratory Testing
- ❖ Specialist Referral
- ❖ VIP Boarding Facility
- ❖ Professional Grooming
- ❖ Puppy School
- ❖ Doggy Day Care service
- ❖ Pet Information Seminars
- ❖ Cat Adoption Services
- ❖ Doggy Exercise and Training
- ❖ Pet Manners Classes



SENSATIONAL SENIORS: Does your pet have any of these symptoms?

How your Vet can help...



Winter is round the corner, and with the cooler days setting in, our older pets can exhibit signs that they are no longer the puppy or kitten they once were! Symptoms such as ongoing stiffness and limping, coughing at night, bad breath, excessive drinking and blindness are signs of age, but there are lots of ways your vet at Happy Tails Vet can help.

Is your pet:

- Stiff in the legs when standing up, limping, unwilling to be petted in certain areas, unable to jump or not as active as they have been? These could all be signs that **arthritis** is setting into their joints. Arthritis is caused by a breakdown of cartilage in joints, allowing bone to rub on bone - creating pain. When recognized early, the vet can advise on medications and lifestyle changes that can keep your pet much more comfortable and happy living with this debilitating condition.
- Coughing at night, breathless, drinking excessively or not keen on regular exercise? These could be signs that your pet's **heart** isn't functioning as well as it used to. The vet will listen to your pet's heart and may recommend x-rays or ultrasound to diagnose the problem. Various medications are available to help your pet have a happy life with this condition.

- Growing lumps? Lumps, even though they may have been there for a long period without change, should be examined & biopsied by the vet. A small needle is inserted into the lump and a few cells removed to examine under the microscope. If nasty cells such as **cancer** are found, early detection & removal of the lump can save your pet's life.
- Always drinking water and forever needing to do a wee? Increase in thirst can be an indicator of many diseases that commonly affect older pets. One of these is **diabetes**, a life-threatening condition if left untreated. The vet will do a blood & urine test for diagnosis.
- Losing or putting on weight? **Weight loss** is an indicator of many medical conditions including hyperthyroidism and kidney failure. **Weight gain** seems to be a problem that gets us all as we get older and are not as active. Heart problems and arthritis are both made worse with excessive weight. Come in to the clinic for a weight check, and ask the vet for advice on a weight loss program - your pet's joints will thank you!

- Going blind? There are many conditions that can cause gradual blindness in your older pet. For example a **cataract** is a slow growing change to the lens of the eye which may result in total blindness. If your pet appears to be bumping into furniture, or you notice changes in their eyes, have them examined by the vet, as many conditions can be treated to preserve the sight of your pet.
- Not desexed? Older undesexed females are at a much greater risk of mammary cancer and **infection of the uterus** - a life-threatening condition that leads to emergency surgery, even death. Undesexed male dogs commonly suffer from a painful condition related to **enlargement or infection of the prostate gland**. Even if your pet is in their senior years, there are still many benefits in having them desexed.
- Having continual bad breath, not chewing well, bleeding from the gums or getting discoloured teeth? See the article in this newsletter on pet **dental disease**.

Our older pets have given us so much love and loyalty through their lives. Even though age catches up with all of us there are lots of ways we can keep them comfortable and healthy in their later years.

A regular checkup by the vet is an essential part of looking after your pet. In addition to checking for all of the above conditions, yearly vaccination is recommended. At this time we can also do a wellness blood test to check how your pet's kidneys, liver and pancreas are functioning. If abnormalities are found in this test, early detection and treatment will prolong the life of your pet.

They say wine grows better with age, and this may also be the case with our lovely older pets!

CALL us at Happy Tails Vet to get your beloved pet checked out by one of our friendly vets!

Phone us on **02 8753 1300**

PET GROOMING

Essential tips for winter pet grooming



The team at Happy Tails Vet would like to welcome our Professional Dog Groomer, Christine Shek. She joined us in mid 2009 and is now offering her great service up to 3 times per week at Happy Tails Veterinary Hospital.

As the autumn/winter months approach, it is important not to forget our four legged best friends. The common thought is that it will be too cold to groom our pets as they need their winter coats to keep warm. Whilst this is true to some extent, we must not forget that we still need to help MAINTAIN their winter coats.

A coat that is too long in certain areas (e.g. around the face and bottom), will encourage a build up of dirt, food, urine or fecal material that can quickly cause skin disease and compromise the skin underneath the hair.

Matts are a result of lack of brushing. Small knots can quickly entrap and tangle more hair, leading to 'matting'. This can cause pets a lot of discomfort as it pulls on the skin, and in serious cases can constrict parts of the body, commonly around the legs.

Simple brushing on a regular basis is a good start. The length and type of your pets coat will determine the frequency of the brushing. It is a good idea to get into a routine of brushing and this can even be done while you are watching your favourite programme on TV! It doesn't take a lot of time and it will help your furry friend stay comfortable and your pet will thank you for it! For those really fluffy ones, a regular face and 'hygiene' trim can keep those important areas short and dirt free.

The breed of your dog/cat will determine the type of brushing/grooming that you will need to provide for your pet. Different breeds have different coat length and type. If you are at all unsure of the type of coat and brushing technique needed to maintain your pet's coat, drop in to Happy Tails Vet and ask our friendly staff for advice.

Some Simple Tips to help maintain your pet's coat through winter:

- ❖ Regular brushing: for long haired pets brushing everyday, for shorter haired pets once to twice a week.
- ❖ Bathing once a week (only if it is not too cold outside and ensure to dry off thoroughly), using an OATMEAL shampoo and conditioner is preferable.
- ❖ Using a Slicker Brush (which can be purchased from our local vets) to remove any 'dead hair' (for medium to long haired dogs/cats). When using the slicker brush, remember to brush with the hair, following the natural fall. Take care when using this brush over bony areas on your pet as you can cause 'brush burns' on the more sensitive parts such as the legs, chest and elbows.
- ❖ Regular trimming of the face and 'hygiene' areas at your grooming salon.
- ❖ If your pet has become too matted beyond your ability to groom, then give us a call to make an appointment with Christine to have a professional groom and assessment.

NEW PUPPY? – ESSENTIAL CHECKLIST FOR OWNERS

- ✓ Has your puppy been fully checked by a vet to ensure it is healthy and to rule out any congenital diseases or deformities?
- ✓ Has your puppy been vaccinated? There are 3 puppy vaccinations that need to be administered before they are 5 months old.
- ✓ Has your puppy been microchipped? Have you received the microchip paperwork?
- ✓ Have you registered your puppy's microchip details? This is a legal requirement before your puppy reaches 6 months of age. You must register your puppy by bringing the microchip paperwork down to your local council.
- ✓ Has your puppy been desexed? This is best done between 5-6 months of age.
- ✓ Is your puppy on premium puppy food?
- ✓ Have you registered your puppy into Puppy School?
- ✓ Have you thought about Pet Insurance to save yourself on any unexpected costs in the future?

For any further information on any of the above or if you think you may have missed any of the points above, please call Happy Tails to see a vet who can get you up to date as soon as possible.