

Dear Rutherford Veterinary clients,

Recently there have been several rulings and evaluations of the use of non-anesthetic dentistry, its place in veterinary care standards, its safety, and long-term ramifications. The American Animal Hospital Association, of which Rutherford is a proud member, has recently ruled against these procedures being performed in any of their certified hospitals. The American Animal Hospital Association is the only organization that inspects and accredits small animal hospitals throughout the U.S. and Canada. There are only 3,200 accredited veterinary hospitals in the U.S. and Canada that have committed to meet the highest standards of veterinary care that the association sets forth. Due to the rulings not only from AAHA but also various veterinary licensing boards, individual states, and the American Veterinary Dental College, we will no longer provide these procedures for our customers and their pets. The AAHA statement and dental care guidelines can be found at https://www.aahanet.org/PublicDocuments/Dental_Guidelines.pdf and below is a generalized statement found on NEWstat.

"The revised guidelines also include a strong statement against ever-controversial non-anesthetic dentistry, which has drawn the ire of many veterinary dental specialists over the years.

Knutson said non-anesthetic dentistry advocates often lead pet owners to believe that the practice is safer and less traumatic than procedures using general anesthesia, but in reality, it holds none of the benefits of comprehensive dental care performed by qualified veterinary professionals.

"While it may make people feel as if they are doing good for their pet's health, it is a false sense of security," Knutson said. "You cannot chart the teeth, evaluate for periodontal disease, take and evaluate X-rays for the purpose of diagnosing pathology or disease without a patient asleep. Additionally, you cannot examine the inner structures of the mouth for signs of cancer or take biopsies."
<http://www.aahanet.org/blog/NewStat/post/2013/03/27/240437/Revised-AAHA-dental-guidelines-emphasize-importance-of-X-rays.aspx>

The American Veterinary Dental College statement can be found at <http://www.avdc.org/statements.html>. The statement can be downloaded as a PDF file and is located approximately mid-page.

In general, the procedure is cosmetic and does nothing to truly treat underlying dental disease or its progression because the sub-gingival surface cannot be cleaned on a patient who is wide awake. We had hoped that if used appropriately these interim non-anesthesia cleanings would reduce the amount of destructive plaque from sitting at the gum line in-between full complete anesthesia cleanings. For us this was especially true for those pets that do not allow brushing, build tartar quicker than can be controlled with traditional methods, and provide a way to help high risk and older patients. Instead what the evaluating organizations and we have seen is too often major structural tooth defects and infection is missed all together. This allows destructive dental disease that can adversely affect your pet's health to continue longer than if a traditional anesthetic deep cleaning and inspection had been performed in the first place.

For many owners, the biggest fear of traditional dental care is anesthesia and the second concern is cost. At our hospital, we approach these concerns on an individual basis. Anesthesia has come a long way and while a guarantee of 100% safety cannot be made, we take the lives our patients very seriously and strive to take every precaution. Research has shown that a "multimodal approach" to anesthesia provides safety and optimal care. "Multimodal" simply means multiple modes, multiple methods, or use of multiple drugs at lower doses for increased safety, to provide pain management, reduced anxiety and predictable anesthetic depth. We design pre-medications and care to meet individual needs with the goal to decrease the amount of anesthetic drugs overall and provide pain control. We closely monitor blood work for any signs of systemic disease, blood pressure, heart rate, and fluid balance. A technician stays with the patient through all stages of the procedure and is an integral part of the patient's monitoring and recovery from anesthesia. While a patient is under anesthesia, we perform a complete oral exam, evaluate radiographs for underlying signs of periodontal disease, use ultrasonic scaling, curettage under the gum line, complete polishing of all tooth surfaces, administer protective fluoride and perform extractions if necessary.

Homecare for your pet is essential for dental health. There are a number of good products now days that help us fight dental disease in our pets. Daily brushing is still the number one recommendation, but appropriately chosen dental chews and oral rinses play an important role also. Look for products that have been studied and many have the Veterinary Oral Health Counsel stamp of approval (<http://www.vohc.org/>). A list of approved products can be found at http://www.vohc.org/accepted_products.htm. We also recommend the C.E.T. line of products, Tartar Shield products, and Maxi-Guard Gel. Know the chewing habits of your pet before you choose a product and always supervise your pet when giving any chewing product.

If after reviewing all the information requiring non-anesthesia dental procedures, you would still like to pursue this care for your pet here are some guidelines:

- Use a facility that has direct veterinary oversight
- Do not allow grooming facilities, pet stores, and home visit individuals work on your pet's teeth.
- If calculus is removed by scaling then the surface must be polished otherwise the tooth is left in a rough condition and then tartar increasingly is allowed to form over time facilitating worse periodontal disease.
- Beware of anyone who claims to be able to perform complete all-inclusive full dental cleaning without anesthesia.
- Beware of products that claim to be able to completely reverse dental disease. There is no perfect 100% product out there.
- Have antibiotics prescribed if gingivitis is present whenever any dental work is performed in your pets mouth
- If teeth are severely disease or in stage 3 and 4 periodontal disease, please do not have non-anesthesia procedure performed –it can be very painful and life threatening systemic bacterial infections can result.

Thank you and please call me directly if you have any questions or concerns,

Teri Rowan, DVM

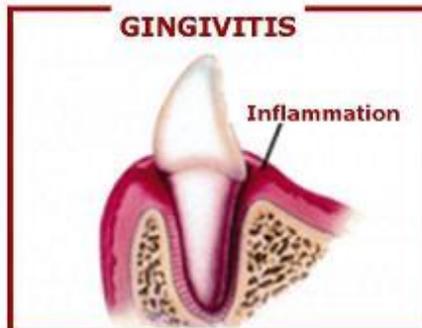


Four Stages of Periodontal Disease

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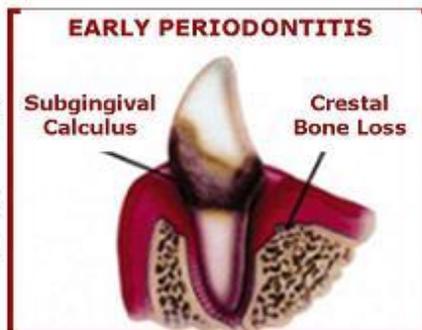
Stage I Gingivitis -

Margin of attached gingiva (gum) is inflamed and swollen. Plaque covering teeth. Treatment can reverse condition.



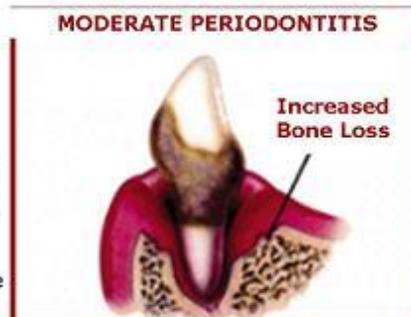
Stage II Early Periodontitis -

Entire attached gum is inflamed and swollen. Mouth is painful and odor begins to be noticeable. Professional treatment and home dental care can prevent this from becoming irreversible.



Stage III Moderate Periodontitis -

Cherry red and bleeding attached gum is being destroyed by infection and calculus (tartar). Sore mouth affects eating and behavior. Bad breath is present. Beginning of periodontal disease. May be irreversible.



Stage IV Advanced Periodontitis -

Chronic bacterial infection is destroying the gum, tooth and bone. Bacteria may be spreading throughout the entire body via the bloodstream and may damage the kidneys, liver and heart.

