



Canine periodontal dental disease, or gum disease in dogs, is an inflammation of some or all of the teeth's deep supporting structures. It is one of the most common diseases in dogs today.



TIP

Regular brushing with pet-safe toothpaste and professional cleaning and polishing as well as the prescribed application of fluoride or other pet prescription products to minimize the development of plaque.

DOGS CAN ALSO DEVELOP TEETH AND GUM PROBLEMS

Gum disease is usually silent. When it starts there are no outward signs and symptoms. Yet once it advances, gum disease can devastate your dog's mouth causing chronic pain, eroded gums, missing teeth, and bone loss -- a fate hardly fair to our furry best friends.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be that way. Though gum disease in dogs is regrettably common, it is preventable. Specialists in veterinary dentistry have explained why dogs get gum disease, its complications and treatment and ultimately, how gum disease in a dog can be prevented or at least slowed.

WHY DO DOGS GET GUM DISEASE?

As in humans if food particles and bacteria are allowed to accumulate along the dog's gum line, it can form plaque, which, when combined with saliva and minerals, transforms into calculus causing gum irritation

leading to an inflammatory condition called Gingivitis. Gingivitis, which is evidenced by a reddening of the gums directly bordering the teeth, is considered to be an early stage of periodontal disease.

SYMPTOMS AND TYPES

Periodontal disease generally begins with the inflammation of one tooth which may progress if not treated during different stages of the condition.

A dog with stage 1 periodontal disease in one or more of its teeth, for example, will exhibit Gingivitis without any separation of the gum and tooth. Stage 2 is characterised by a 25% attachment loss, while stage 3 involves a 25 to 30% attachment loss.

In stage 4, which is also called advanced periodontitis, there is more than a 50% attachment loss. In the most advanced stage of the disease, the gum tissue will usually recede and the roots of the teeth will be exposed.

CAUSES

Periodontal disease can be caused by a variety of factors. In dogs, the most common causes are the Streptococcus and Actinomyces bacteria. Canine toy breeds with crowded teeth and dogs that groom themselves carry a higher risk of acquiring the disease. In addition, poor nutrition will also contribute to the onset of the condition.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of periodontal disease involves a number of procedures. If periodontal probing reveals more than two millimeters of distance between the gingivitis-affected gum and tooth, a dog is considered to have some form of periodontal abnormality.

X-rays are extremely important in diagnosing periodontal disease because up to 60% of the symptoms are hidden beneath the gum line. In the disease's early stages, radiographic imaging will reveal loss of density and sharpness of the root socket (alveolar) margin. In more advanced stages, it will reveal loss of bone support around the root of the affected tooth.

TREATMENT

The specific treatment for periodontal disease depends on how advanced the disease is. In the early stages, treatment is focused on controlling plaque and preventing attachment loss. This is achieved by daily brushing with animal safe toothpaste, professional cleaning, polishing, and the prescribed application of fluoride.

In stage 2 or 3, the treatment involves the cleansing of the space between the gums and teeth and the application of antibiotic gel to rejuvenate periodontal tissues and decrease the size of the space.

In the more advanced stages, bone replacement procedures, periodontal splinting and guided tissue regeneration may become necessary.

LIVING AND MANAGEMENT

Follow-up treatment for periodontal disease consists mostly of good dental care and weekly, quarterly or half-yearly checks. Prognosis in dogs will depend on how advanced the disease is but the best way to minimise the adverse affects caused by the disease is to get an early diagnosis, adequate treatment and appropriate therapy.

PREVENTION

The best prevention for dog gum disease is to maintain your pet's good oral hygiene and to regularly brush and clean their mouth and gums.

Dogs can be trained to accept brushing when trained slowly over time and rewarded for their cooperation.

Prescription dog food dental diets are available for those pups who are less inclined to have their teeth brushed.

For further information on the management of your dog's dental health please contact your vet or the team at our Lost Dogs Home Veterinary Hospital (03) 8379 4498 or vetclinic@dogshome.com



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