



Chastain Veterinary Medical Group Pet Health Fact Sheet

12 Steps for Complete Small Animal Veterinary Dental Care

The Twelve Basic Steps for Complete Small Animal Veterinary Dental Care are as follows:

1. General Physical exam
2. Initial Oral & Dental exam
3. Obvious Tartar Removal
 - Removes obvious plaque, calculus, & tartar above the gum line.
 - Performed under “Low Impact” anesthesia with careful monitoring.
 - This is the most visible part of the teeth cleaning process to pet owners.
 - Yet this is one of the least important parts of the teeth cleaning process for the pet.
 - This is the only step that can even be attempted by non-veterinary “no-anesthesia” canine teeth cleaning services
4. Sub-Gingival Tartar Removal
 - Removes plaque, and tartar below the gum line.
 - This is the least visible part of the teeth cleaning process for the pet's family.
 - Yet, this is the most important part of the procedure for the patient.
 - Sub-Gingival Tartar Removal may encompass any of these three sub-steps: a) Subgingival scaling (calculus or tartar removal); b) Root planning (smoothing rough surfaces); c) Subgingival Curettage (soft tissue debridement of the inside of the gingival pocket).
5. Teeth Polishing
 - Removes enamel surface defects and irregularities.
 - Slows the re-accumulation of plaque and tartar.
 - Makes the teeth look nice and pretty.
6. Gum Irrigation
 - This step helps remove all debris from below the gum line.
7. Ancillary Treatments: Application of a whitening agent, followed by a dental fluoride treatment, and finally application of a crown sealant
 - The whitening agent improves the cosmetic appearance of the teeth.
 - The fluoride strengthens enamel, desensitizes exposed dentin and/or cementum and decreases the incidence of cavities.

- The crown sealant helps prevent adhesion of the oral bacteria which create the dental plaque and tartar in the first place.
8. Complete Tooth Charting to identify & document problem areas
 - Many pets will have unexpected problem areas.
 - All abnormalities are recorded in the pet's chart.
 - Example problems: Periodontal pockets over 3mm in dogs and 1 mm in cats; Receding gums, Furcation exposures; Tooth Fractures and areas of exposed dentin; Wiggly teeth; Dead / non-viable teeth; Exposed tooth roots.
 9. Dental X-rays (Radiographs)
 - All suspicious areas should be radiographed.
 - About 80% of the important canine and feline dental anatomy is below the gum line and not visible to the eye.
 10. Formulate & Implement an Additional Dental Treatment Plan, if need be
 - Veterinarian determines what treatment beyond basic tooth cleaning, if any, is needed.
 - Veterinarian determines what additional medications, if any, are needed.
 - Pet Owner & Family are consulted for their preferences and insights.
 - A final additional treatment plan is agreed upon and initiated.
 11. Formulate & Implement a Veterinary Dental Home Care Plan
 - Veterinary Dental Home Care options are outlined for the family, discussed, agreed upon, and demonstrated.
 12. Follow-Up
 - The next appointment for professional veterinary dental care - whether it's a no-charge follow up or next part of a multi-stage treatment program - can be scheduled at the time the pet goes home.