

Dental Information for Patients of Rivertown Animal Hospital

Rivertown Animal Hospital dental protocols have been developed with your pet's safety, pain management and quality of dental care as our top priorities. While many hospitals make these safety features optional it is our strong belief that when your pet is in our hands we will not cut corners. We are proud of our dental practice and have made every effort to provide the highest level of care to ensure your pet's safety and therapeutic success.

Dental health is a key component of the overall health for your pet. Our doctors have many years of extensive training in the diagnosis and treatments of veterinary dental disease. Our investment in dental equipment includes dental radiology, blood pressure monitoring and bear hugger warming system allowing us to provide the highest level of dental care for our patients. We are uncompromising in providing safety including preanesthetic blood screening, fluid therapy, total body warming and pain management.

A dental cleaning is performed to remove tartar and calculus that have built up on your pet's teeth and below the gum line. This material is made up of bacteria that can invade the blood stream and affect the heart, kidneys, liver and other organs. The earliest stage of dental disease is called gingivitis. This is where you see inflammation of the gum tissue. It is the only stage of dental disease that is reversible. Infected gums will lead to periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is a deep infection of the gum tissue and involves pockets and bone loss. It is not reversible but it can be stopped from getting any worse.

- 1. Preanesthetic blood screening** is performed on all pets anesthetized at Rivertown Animal Hospital. **Your pet's safety is important to us.** The tests allow us to evaluate the health of your pet, including kidney and liver function, blood sugar, hydration and anemia. He or she is also given a general health exam prior to the procedure.
- 2. An IV catheter** is placed in all patients. Continuous fluid support is essential to maintain blood pressures, prevent dehydration and process the anesthetics.
- 3. General anesthesia** is required to work on the patient's mouth. The types of anesthetics used are chosen to provide safe anesthetic induction, maintenance and recovery. We want to relieve the patient's anxiety and minimize any pain during and after the dental therapy. Anesthesia is monitored by Certified Veterinary Technicians. Monitors measure heart rate, oxygen levels and blood pressures throughout the procedure.
- 4. Pain management is a priority of this hospital.** Animals needing extractions are given pain medication by injection prior to the procedure. A local anesthetic block is placed before the extraction. These blocks provide 21 hours of pain relief, reducing the amount of anesthetic needed and reduce pain on recovery. An NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) is given by injection and another is dispensed for at-home use following any extraction or painful procedure.

5. A dental procedure involves more than just a cleaning. **A complete oral exam** is performed by a veterinarian trained in veterinary dentistry. All abnormalities are charted for the medical record. A Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT) uses an ultrasonic scaler to clean the teeth. They are polished, treated with fluoride, and Oravet, a waxy barrier sealant, is placed on the clean teeth.
6. **Dental radiographs** may be needed to evaluate your pet's teeth below the gum line. Dental radiology is a valuable and essential tool for making the correct diagnosis. It is necessary to find diseased and abscessed teeth and prevents the unnecessary extraction of healthy teeth.
7. **Dental extractions** are performed on teeth that are broken, abscessed or have very little bone attachment left. Extractions are necessary to treat infection and to stop chronic pain in the mouth. In some cases, root canal therapy is an option to save an infected or broken tooth.
8. A **detailed written estimate** is provided prior to the dental procedure. Commonly, unexpected problems are found once your pet is anesthetized and a thorough exam of the mouth can be performed. If the patient requires extractions or periodontal therapy the estimate may need to be adjusted. **No procedure will be performed without your consent; therefore, it is very important for us to be able to reach you during the dental cleaning.** Prior consent may be given for treatment the doctor feels is necessary by initialing the patient consent form.
9. **Your pet will go home the same day.** We will schedule a discharge appointment to review information regarding the dental procedures and follow-up care.
10. A **follow-up exam** – 10 to 14 days after the cleaning and extractions – is scheduled. We want to see how your pet is doing, check any extraction sites and review home care. This dental exam is at **no additional charge.**
11. Good **home care** for your pet, including daily or frequent brushing and weekly application of Oravet, will help prevent plaque and calculus build-up that leads to periodontal disease and bad breath. It only takes seven days for the film on the teeth to harden.
12. **What next?** If you follow good home care, your pet should be evaluated in another six to nine months. The rule of thumb is small and toy dogs may need scaling and polishing every six months. Larger breeds can usually go a year. But the more you brush the better for you both. Please call us if you would like a free evaluation within a year of your pet's dental appointment.

Our clients want the best care possible for their pets. The most common concerns owners have include safety of anesthesia, the age of the pet, pain following extractions and the pet's fear of being left behind. These are our concerns as well. We take all the precautions we possibly can to make the procedure safe, pain free and comfortable for your dog or cat. Each patient is treated gently, with care and concern for their safety and wellbeing. We care for your special friend the way we care for our own.

The benefits of a healthy mouth are immeasurable. Your pet will have fresher breath, making him or her more pleasant to live with, and will be healthier, happier and free of chronic pain, and may even have a longer life.