

General Practice Service
Willows Information Sheets

Dental procedure – what to expect



Why is this dental necessary?

Dental work is advised for a number of reasons. There may be a specific lesion in the mouth which is causing pain and predisposing to infection, or there may be a general accumulation of tartar which may result in periodontal disease (infection around the teeth).

Oral pain often goes unnoticed in pets – even when they are in considerable discomfort, most animals will continue to eat. It is common for owners not to notice a problem before a dental but afterwards to see a significant improvement in the appetite and demeanour of their pet.

Dental disease has been shown to allow bacteria in to the system and potentially to cause infections elsewhere in the body.

Is an anaesthetic necessary?

A general anaesthetic is required for a dental to be performed in dogs and cats and it is therefore important that the patient be starved overnight before the procedure. As with any anaesthetic, we recommend that your pet has its evening meal by 8pm on the evening before the procedure. You should not leave any food down overnight and it is important that cats stay in overnight so that they don't help themselves from a neighbouring cat's food bowl or catch a takeaway mouse! Water should not be withheld but rather should be left down overnight with access allowed until you leave home in the morning.

Please bring your pet into the practice at 7.45am on the day of the dental procedure unless otherwise instructed.

What happens during a dental procedure?

Your pet will have a pre-medication injection which is usually a combination of sedative and pain relief. The anaesthetic drugs and sometimes fluids are given into a vein on a front leg so your pet will have a small clipped-up area here. A tube is placed down the windpipe and tied into position. The back of the throat is then carefully packed to prevent fluid going down the gullet or around the tube.

Initially, any large lumps of tartar are removed, then the teeth are ultrasonically scaled above and below the gum line. The teeth are subsequently probed and investigated to find any specific problem areas. Any teeth with problems which will not resolve after treatment will be extracted. Sometimes X-rays are used to assess teeth and the bone around them.

Problems which necessitate extraction include:

- chips or fractures which go into the pulp cavity
- 'neck lesions' in cats (feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions)
- abscesses
- cavities
- severe periodontal disease (pyorrhoea)

When teeth have been extracted the sockets are usually stitched. The sutures are dissolvable and do not need removing.

What happens after a dental procedure?

Unless you have already heard from us, please call the surgery at the time you will have been told to find out what time your pet will need to be collected

Very occasionally animals will need to stay at the surgery overnight. This might occur in a very old or frail animal, or if many teeth have been extracted.

Cats will need to be kept inside at home overnight for the first night.

Some animals will need pain relief or antibiotics to go home with.

Some patients can have an upset tummy after an anaesthetic, so we recommend a small bland meal on the first evening – boiled white fish or chicken (with rice for dogs) is a good choice. After this, it will depend on how many teeth are extracted as to when you put your pet back on its normal diet. In general, dry food is much better for teeth than tinned or sachet food. (See our information sheets on [Nutrition in dogs](#) and [Nutrition in Cats](#))

Some animals will take a few days to fully recover from an anaesthetic.

You will be asked to make an appointment for about one week after the procedure for your pet to be examined. Should you have any concerns before that time please contact the surgery as soon as possible.

Please see our information sheet on [Dental care for dogs and cats](#).

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

General Practice Service
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