

Oral health assessment stage two:

8. Extractions

If the dental disease found is serious, the best course of action may be to remove the affected tooth. Whenever a tooth is to be extracted, we place a local anaesthetic block to numb the tooth.

Even though our patients are under anaesthetic, removing a tooth can be painful and the block provides immediate pain relief. The effect will last several hours to provide comfort post-procedure. Once the block has taken effect, we elevate a flap of gum tissue to expose the jawbone. A high-speed drill is used to cut the tooth into smaller sections for easier removal. The tooth is then removed using special hand instruments. A post-extraction X-ray may be taken to ensure all the roots have been removed. The socket is then closed and sutured with a fine absorbable suture to prevent food material becoming lodged in the socket.



This pre-molar was removed via a surgical technique in which a flap of gum is lifted, the tooth removed, then sutured in order to heal faster with reduced risk of infection. These sutures will dissolve once the surgical site has healed.

9. Recovery

Whilst your pet is waking up from general anaesthesia, our Veterinary Nurses are with them to ensure they are warm and comfortable, whilst continuously monitoring and administering any intravenous fluids.

They will keep you fully informed and let you know how your pet is doing and when they are able to come home.

10. Post-operative checks

When you come back to The Pet Vet to pick up your pet, we will provide post-operative instructions for you to help you care for your pet.

These may include providing soft food and no toothbrushing for several days. We will discuss at-home management options to reduce future accumulation of calculus on the teeth.

These may include a combination of toothbrushing, specially formulated dental diets or water/food additives designed to discourage plaque build-up. We will then see your pet back 3 and 10 days post-procedure to ensure they are recovering and healing well.



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Ten step guide to dental health

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1. Physical examination

At The Pet Vet, we examine a pet's mouth as part of the general physical health examination every time we see a pet at one of our surgeries.

We look for signs of obvious disease in the mouth and can get a rough idea of what we may need to do during a dental procedure. It can be difficult to examine your pet's mouth while they are awake and we are only able to assess the crowns of the teeth (the top), not the roots.

2. Pre-operative bloodwork and examination

All animals that undergo a general anaesthesia at The Pet Vet receive a full examination on the day of the procedure in order to ensure they are healthy.

We offer pre-anaesthetic bloodwork for all of our patients (particularly recommended for our senior pets) to ensure their kidneys and liver are healthy. Our patients receive intravenous fluids to help them process the anaesthetic medication and maintain a good blood pressure. Fit and healthy pets undergoing these procedures will not require antibiotics as in most cases removing problem teeth also removes any infection.

3. Under general anaesthesia

Dentistry work requires your pet to be under general anaesthesia to ensure we can do a thorough job and to prevent your pet moving and causing injury during the procedure.

As well as the care provided by the Vet, all patients will have a Veterinary Nurse overseeing the anaesthetic. Your pet will be anaesthetised and a catheter inserted (generally in their foreleg) and monitoring equipment placed. The Veterinary Nurse closely monitors your pet during the procedure and in some cases intravenous fluids can be given to help them process the anaesthetic medication.

Oral health assessment stage one:

4. Scale and polish

Just like at your own dentist, we use an ultrasonic scaler which is an electronic device to remove calculus from the teeth. Calculus is a mineral structure produced by bacteria which live on your pet's teeth.

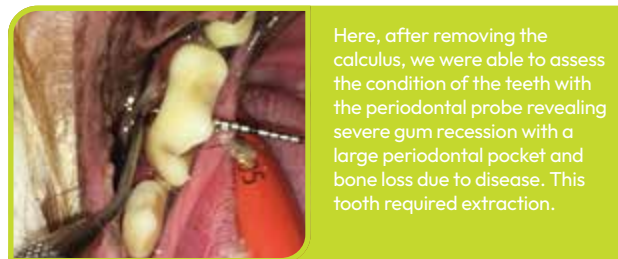
A build up of calculus leads to painful inflammation of the gums (gingivitis), gum recession, exposure of the tooth roots and eventual tooth loss. Removal of this calculus both above and below the gumline is essential to keeping your pet's mouth healthy and removing the source of bad breath (halitosis). Polishing is the process of removing microscopic fragments of calculus leaving a smooth tooth surface.



5. Health assessment

Once the teeth have been scaled, each tooth is individually assessed using a periodontal probe. This allows us to locate any gingival pockets caused when the gum loses its attachment to the tooth.

Bacteria and calculus accumulate in these pockets causing the tooth socket to erode (which in turn leads to tooth loss). Small pockets can be flushed and cleaned, but deep pockets often require removal of the affected tooth.



Here, after removing the calculus, we were able to assess the condition of the teeth with the periodontal probe revealing severe gum recession with a large periodontal pocket and bone loss due to disease. This tooth required extraction.

6. Intra-oral X-rays

When looking at your pet's mouth, the only visible structure is the crown of the tooth. The tooth roots are below the gumline within a socket of the jawbone.

Often the crown may appear normal, but X-rays of the tooth reveal a problem that requires treatment. If left unnoticed, this would continue to cause pain and eventual tooth loss. Once X-rays have been taken, the Vet reviews the pictures and creates a plan for each tooth. If you wish to learn more about our dental X-rays, please ask one of our colleagues who will be happy to discuss further.



This is a dental X-ray from a cat involved in a car accident. As well as breaking her top two canines she also had a root fragment below the gumline (circled in red) and a broken incisor (circled in blue). These could not be seen on examination without X-rays and would have continued to be painful without removal.

In most cases, no extractions take place during a stage one procedure unless it is deemed as an emergency by the Vet. This is because two short anaesthetics is much safer for your pet than one long procedure. If emergency extractions are required, the Vet will call you during the stage one procedure to discuss additional costs.

7. Charting

The combination of periodontal probing and X-rays allows the Vet to accurately diagnose any problems with your pet's teeth and formulate a treatment plan.

This is all documented on a dental chart which we will take you through when you arrive to pick up your pet. You may request a copy of this at any time.