

(first published in THE CRITTER CHRONICLE, the Aladdin Animal Hospital quarterly newsletter for clients in February 2000)

by Janice W. Price, DVM

“DOG BREATH”

Have you noticed lately that “Rover’s” breath is bad enough to make a moose blush? Is your cat not keeping her fur clean and sparkling? Is either pet spilling food? Not playing with toys? If so, your furry housemates are NOT alone--foul breath and oral pain are signs of dental problems; ***75% of all dogs and cats have some form of periodontal disease by age 3!***

Periodontal disease is largely a problem of domestication. Wild carnivores, such as wolves and lions, seldom have dental problems, other than dental fractures, due to the flossing action of wild game on the teeth. Thankfully, our dogs and cats don’t have to hunt for their dinner, other than finding their food bowl. Dry pet food has limited scrubbing action on the teeth; canned pet food has none. Since dogs and cats are NOT known for brushing their teeth, tartar builds up rapidly on their teeth and under their gums. The gums get sore, infected and eventually recede. The affected dog or cat gets very bad breath, the mouth becomes a dangerous source of infection, and the pet goes through high levels of pain just to eat or drink. Bacteria from untreated dental problems commonly get into the bloodstream, causing liver and kidney problems, and damage to the heart valves in a disease process similar to rheumatic fever in people with chronic strep throat. Tooth loss is an unfortunate additional consequence. ***This cascade of events is preventable, and can be interrupted at any step of the way--a thorough professional cleaning to correct existing problems, and regular home dental care to prevent future ones.***

If your pet is in the high-risk group for dental disease:

- 3 years of age or older
- no dental cleaning in the past year

you owe him or her a moment of your time to check for dental disease. Note if the breath is foul, the teeth are tartar-coated (just lift up the lips and look, especially at the big molar teeth in the back), or the gums are swollen, puffy, or red. If these problems are noted, your pet needs to have its dental disease professionally evaluated.

Due to the advances in modern veterinary medicine and nutrition, we can reasonably expect 15 to 20 years with our dogs, and 20 to 25 years with our cats. Careful dental care is one the easiest and most effective ways of insuring we to enjoy every precious moment with our pets, and has been proven to ADD three to five years to your pet’s lifespan. Don’t let yourself be cheated out of even one second! Remember, we want “Rover” to keep his toothy grin, and “Kitty” to flash that Cheshire Cat smile, all their lives. Start good pet dental care today!

Call us today at **972-874-8387** to schedule your pet’s FREE dental health examination--for your pet’s health and comfort (as well as for that “moose” breath!!)