

# Ask the Vet

## Tim Banker DVM, FAVD



*Dr. Tim Banker has been in general practice for over 36 years and has always seen the need for proper dental care for his patients. In fact, in the 1970's many people laughed at his dedication to his patient's dental health. Today he is considered a pioneer in the field of Veterinary Dentistry. Dr. Banker is the owner of Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center and for the past 28 years he has been a referral dentist and seen patients from all over the Southeastern United States and Canada.*

Q What do I need to do to insure my dog's teeth are properly cared for? Can dental problems cause pain and shorten my pet's life?

### Dental Myths

A They've been passed on from generation to generation. You've heard them, I've heard them, and I was taught them by the Veterinarians that preceded me. Here are a few 'truths' you've probably heard that I would consider Dental Myths.

#### Myth #1 - Give your dog Milk Bone® Dog Biscuits to keep your pet's teeth clean.

Milk Bones have never been scientifically shown to reduce plaque or calculus. There are certain dental diets and chew devices that have been scientifically shown to slow plaque and calculus accumulation. Even with these more effective products, however, regular dental checkups and professional cleanings are needed.

While it is important to slow down plaque and calculus accumulation on teeth, a clean crown doesn't necessarily mean there is not a problem. We have seen numerous patients with nice, clean teeth that still had significant disease under the gum line.

#### Myth #2 - Dogs should chew on bones to keep their teeth clean.

Certain bones will help remove plaque and calculus from teeth. Yet, they will also break teeth. A dog's teeth were not designed to chew on bones, cow hooves, Nylabones® or anything else that are hard and rigid. A dog's enamel is thinner than a person's and they have 4 – 10 times the bite force as a person. If they bite down on a hard substance with no 'give' to it, the tooth will break. If you choose to give these hard objects to your pet, you are putting their important chewing teeth 'at risk'.

We can discuss with you how to create a custom oral hygiene program for your pet that is 'safe' for your pet's teeth.

#### Myth #3 - Dogs and cats don't feel pain like humans.

A lot of research was done in the area of pain in animals in the 1990s. The researchers found that the pain response of a dog or cat is the same as a human. They feel pain just as we do. They just 'hide their pain'.

Our pet's survival instinct has them mask their pain just as animals in the wild hide it. A 'hurt' animal in the wild will become food for other animals; therefore they learn to hide pain to survive. This instinct is still present in our pets. We will often see our patients have a 'great improvement in their personality', seem 'happier and more energetic' or 'act younger or more like themselves'. When you remove their source of oral pain, they feel better.

#### Myth #4 - Pets seem to do fine with broken teeth, they don't need to be treated.

Pets tolerate pain and get by to survive. Yet, when we treat teeth with root canal therapy or extract them, they feel and do much better.

In the early stages broken or damaged teeth are acutely painful. As the nerve dies the pain lessens until the infection in the inside of the tooth breaks out into the bone. At this point the patient experiences severe pain.

Broken and damaged teeth need to be treated. We hope that this information is enlightening and helps you better understand misinformation that has been 'passed on' unconsciously for generations.

## Sedgefield Animal Hospital and Dental Center

"Where Quality and Caring are more than just words"



Kaleb

We are a well-established, full-service, small animal veterinary hospital providing comprehensive medical, surgical and dental care to the Piedmont Triad for **over 30 years.**

### Services Offered:

- Advanced Dental Care
- Immunization and Wellness Care
- Surgery
- Dermatology
- Pediatric and Geriatric Care
- Pain Management
- Radiology
- Nutritional Counseling
- Behavioral Counseling
- In-House Laboratory/Pharmacy
- Boarding/Daycare/Bathing



Theo

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