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Dr. Banker (a.k.a. “Dental Dude”) has been in general practice for over 43 years and has always seen the need for proper dental care for his patients. Today he is considered a pioneer in the field of Veterinary Dentistry. Dr. Banker is the owner of Sedgfield Animal Hospital and Dental Center and for the past 35 years he has been a referral dentist and seen patients from all over the Southern United States and Canada.



Good oral health is an important part of your pet's overall health.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “TEETH CLEANING” AND A COMPREHENSIVE ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT?

Comprehensive Oral Health Assessment (or COHA) is not simply a “teeth cleaning.” For years veterinarians have used the term “dental,” but what does it really mean?

Think about the visits you make to your own dentist's office. The hygienist will take regular dental radiographs of your teeth and periodically do a Panorex to monitor all of your teeth, the jaw bone and sinuses. Each time you visit she/he will do a periodontal and dental examination and screen for oral cancer before scaling and polishing your teeth. Then the dentist will review all of the findings. If any problems exist, she/he will create a treatment plan and review the different treatment options to you. This is the exact same way we approach Veterinary Dentistry. We start with a COHA because a proper treatment and diagnosis cannot be completed without a thorough assessment.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A COMPREHENSIVE ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT?

During the COHA the following are evaluated and completed:

1. **Bite Evaluation** – The teeth are checked for proper alignment. Many “bad bites” can cause pain and discomfort due to trauma from an abnormal tooth causing trauma to the tooth itself or to the soft tissue/palate.
2. **Oral Examination** – The entire head and neck area along with all of the structures of the mouth (beyond the teeth & gums) are examined for any abnormalities. This includes oral cancer screening which is a very important part of the COHA.
3. **Periodontal Examination** – Periodontal disease is the most common infection in both man and animals. A periodontal exam is performed by closely inspecting the gums and probing carefully around each individual tooth, 42 in dogs and 30 in cats. The periodontal probe detects hidden areas of bone and tissue loss, inflammation and infection.
4. **Dental Examination** – All of the surfaces of the teeth are examined for fractures, wearing, defects, abnormalities and discoloration. Broken teeth and abscessed teeth can be extremely painful!
5. **Dental Radiography** – Dental radiographs are essential for a complete oral diagnosis. Consider that 60-70% of the tooth is hidden

below the gum line and cannot be evaluated without radiographs. Many dental conditions can only be found with radiographs. They are used as a diagnostic and screening tool.

6. **Additional Oral Diagnostic Tests** – Sometimes tissue samples are collected or bacterial cultures taken to be sent out to an outside laboratory for further testing. After all the findings are recorded and charted, a treatment plan is created for each of the oral problems that are found. Sometimes they can be treated at this initial diagnostic visit; often follow-up procedures are needed at a later date.
7. **Professional Dental Cleaning** (Initial Periodontal Therapy) – During the visit all of the surfaces of the teeth are scaled and polished both above and below the gum line. This is done to remove all of the plaque and calculus on the teeth, which is the cause of the inflammation and infection in the gums. The tissues are rinsed with an oral disinfecting solution and then a periodontal sealant is applied to all of the surfaces of the teeth to slow down the accumulation of plaque.

WHEN SHOULD MY PET SEE A VETERINARY DENTIST?

Just as your own primary care physician may feel the need to refer you to the care of a specialist from time to time, your general practitioner veterinarian may feel your pet needs the additional expertise of a veterinarian who has advanced dental training for certain conditions, such as root canal therapy, oral surgery or advanced periodontal treatment and diagnostics.



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**Sedgfield Animal Hospital
and Dental Center**

Providing advanced
veterinary dental care since 1981.

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