



THE BARRACKS  
VET SURGERY  
MOSMAN

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## TEETH FOR LIFE - DOGS

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A dog's lifespan is now far longer given domesticity, modern medicine and nutrition meaning their teeth require a long term preventative program and care to go the distance - **prevention is fundamental.**

Puppies are usually born without any teeth and their baby (deciduous) teeth begin erupting at around 3 weeks of age. By 8 weeks most dog breeds will have their full set of teeth, 28 altogether. These baby teeth are quite brittle and very sharp! The adult permanent teeth begin to erupt (with the loss of the associated deciduous tooth) at about 3 months of age starting with the central incisors (small front teeth). Some toy breeds teeth may be a little slower to erupt but generally by 6 months of age all the adult teeth should have erupted with no baby teeth remaining.

A retained deciduous tooth is where the adult tooth erupts beside the deciduous tooth (instead of a deciduous tooth falling out before the adult tooth erupts in the same place). This occurs because the adult tooth is in the wrong position and is quite common especially in small breeds. It is important to ensure that you get the teeth checked whenever your puppy is at the vet and any retained deciduous teeth can be removed under anaesthetic before or during the desexing procedure at 5 – 6 months of age.

Dental disease is an all too common problem and poor dental management = poor dental hygiene. Unlike humans, fillings are often not an option, with extractions being the only solution. Amazingly, 85% of pets over 3 years of age suffer from periodontal disease which is usually in the form of gingivitis (inflamed gums). Plaque (a mixture of food particles, saliva and bacteria) is also a major problem and it is this bacteria that causes so much damage. Bacteria entering the blood stream via inflamed gums will cause tooth decay and also damage the heart, liver and kidneys resulting in expensive veterinary bills for you but even worse, a much shorter life for your pet.

Puppies love to chew and using commonsense, this should be encouraged to assist the development of healthy gums and teeth. Chewing for dental health is important and due to domesticity the need for hunting has been removed. The closest we can get is to feed them raw meaty bones (never feed cooked bones) such as chicken wings as 20% of their diet. The remaining 80% should be given as a recommended dry food such as Royal Canin, Hills Science Diet and Eukanuba or a food of equal quality. For dental health purposes, soft food should be avoided and only given occasionally as a treat. This percentage ratio will not only provide your dog with a healthy diet but will also help to clean and maintain healthy teeth and gums.

Please speak to your veterinarian or one of the nurses on duty if you require assistance or have any queries regarding the above information.