



Merrimack Veterinary Hospital

235 Daniel Webster Hwy, Merrimack, NH 03054

Your Pet's Dental Procedure

Your pet is being seen today for a Comprehensive Oral Health Assessment and Treatment (COHAT). As much as we try to evaluate the mouth during a routine physical examination, there is only so much we can see on an awake patient and there are often surprises to be found when we look more closely. 80% of the dental disease in animals is beneath the gum line where it can only be found with an anesthetized oral examination and dental x-rays; this is where the COHAT comes in. Today's procedure is the first step in resolving disease in the mouth to make your furry family member healthier. Depending on the severity of disease found, some patients will need to come back for follow up staged procedure(s) to fully eliminate the problem.

Today's COHAT will include the removal of all plaque and calculus above and below the gum line, probing to look for gingival pockets and areas of bone loss, full mouth dental radiographs, polishing the teeth, and charting all abnormalities. In addition to the standard COHAT, we may apply dental sealants to the teeth to help slow the formation of future disease or take biopsies if any masses or lesions are found. After today's COHAT, your dog or cat will be woken up and we will discuss any additional findings and additional care that may be needed at a discharge appointment. *We will not be extracting teeth or performing advanced dental procedures today.* If your dog or cat requires additional dental work, it will be scheduled for completion in the next few weeks.

If you've had veterinary dental work done in the past, I'm sure you are wondering, "Why are we staging the procedure and not doing everything today?" The staging of dental procedures is done to maximize the safety of your dog or cat and to remove the unknowns to making your dog or cat's mouth as healthy as possible.

- The greatest risk for anesthesia is the duration. By breaking up the dental work into several shorter procedures, we significantly decrease risks and your dog or cat will recover much faster than if we did one long marathon. There is no additional risk to having multiple anesthetic procedures.
- Avoiding marathon procedures prevents fatigue and makes sure your doctor and the technicians are as fresh as possible. This increases safety and decreases surgical time.
- The COHAT will remove the active infection from the mouth. By allowing the mouth to recover following the COHAT, any oral surgery is now performed in a clean environment and the tissue is healthier. This decreases surgical time and potential complications and speeds up healing.
- If significant dental disease is found, staging will allow for proper informed consent. A doctor will talk to you at discharge to go over any findings, discuss the additional treatment that is needed, and give a proper estimate. You will be able to review the dental x-rays and ask questions and avoid having to make a decision over the phone to do expensive additional work that was not planned.
- Staging the procedure will not increase the cost of the procedure. Provided the follow up procedure is done in a timely manner, we will not need to repeat blood work and will not charge for the anesthetic induction or hospitalization. There will be a charge for the additional anesthetic time, but since we will not be keeping your dog or cat under anesthesia while we make the estimate, call you, and discuss the findings, the total cost will be less than if done as one procedure.
- Staging allows us to better schedule surgery. By doing the entire procedure at once, we cannot predict how long each dental procedure will take. If the first patient of the day turns takes 3-4 hours, now everyone else gets pushed back and everyone goes home late. By staging we can better predict when your dog or cat will be going to surgery and when they can go home.

If you have any questions about today's COHAT procedure, please feel free to talk to our staff.