

# Beyond Fresh Breath: The Hidden Benefits of COHAT Dental Cleanings

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As dogs and cats live longer, the veterinary profession is evolving to understand the immense benefits of preventive care. As we have intertwined our lives with those of our pets, we have historically overlooked the importance of their dental health. Your pet's bad breath is not just an inconvenience for you, it is an indication that deeper dental disease can be hiding. Prioritizing their dental health goes beyond fresh breath, it is their quality of life at stake. Although a safe and complete COHAT procedure does have an associated cost, we want to share the positive impact this will have on your pet's life. We ask you to challenge conventional thoughts on pets and their dental health....are they really okay without it?



## What Makes a COHAT Different:

At our clinic, we are dedicated to performing [COHATs: comprehensive oral health assessment and treatments](#). They are completed by both a Licensed Veterinarian assisted by a Registered Veterinary Technician. This means your pet is getting a safe and thorough procedure following a set of guidelines backed by AAHA and the American Veterinary Dental College. By definition, COHATs must include dental radiographs. Think of the tooth as an iceberg, you can only appreciate what is above the surface while the majority of the tooth including its roots are below the surface. Guess where the majority of disease happens in the mouth? **Below the gumline!** During the COHAT procedure, the only way to fully assess your pet's dental health is by using dental radiographs. For this reason, full mouth dental radiographs are non-negotiable during a COHAT procedure.

## The Medical Impact of Untreated Dental Disease:

We know that having clean teeth goes beyond fresh breath. According to [David E. Clark DVM, DAVDC](#), oral health is not a luxury. Health concerns that begin in the mouth impact overall health, comfort, and wellbeing. Just like for us, the oral cavity is not an isolated system. Research continues to establish the link between dental disease and its effects on the body as a whole. Oral pathogens have been cultured from valves in the heart and the kidneys indicating progress of disease from the mouth to other organs. Bacteremia (bacteria in the blood) is a known consequence of severe dental disease in dogs and cats. As blood moves throughout the body, it carries infectious bacteria which bombards life sustaining organs, like the heart and kidneys. That is not good! This results in a state of constant inflammation coupled with chronic pain, which no pet deserves to live through.



## Behavior Changes Linked to Oral Pain:

Dogs and cats innately hide pain and discomfort until they reach a point where they can't maintain that facade. They can be very stoic and sneaky, hiding their true health status when things are happening to them. Subtle changes that an owner may observe at home may include irritability, reduced play, and changes to chewing habits. Did you know dogs and cats will quietly compensate for tooth pain when eating by just swallowing their dry food whole? We see it more often than you believe. On the surface nutritional intake is affected but on a deeper level, a decrease in quality of life associated with food enrichment also occurs. Lots of dogs and cats love to chew on things as part of play or mental stimulation. Another consequence of dental disease is changes in food preferences. We see this often with cats fed both a wet and dry diet. They start having a preference for wet food over dry food or may drop dry food from their mouth.

## Quality of Life Improvements After COHATs:

Time and time again, we get reports from owners relaying positive behavior changes they see in their pet after having a COHAT. From "my senior dog is acting two again" to "I thought they were just getting old, they started to play and run around again after their dental." When owners consider the fact that comfort, function, and wellbeing are inseparable, the investment in the oral health of your pet becomes an essential part of their preventive care. As veterinary professionals, we cannot stress this enough: dental health is whole body health. As Dr. Clarke said, it is a cornerstone.

## Dental Health Screenings Can Be Done At Yearly Appointments:

When you bring your pet in for their yearly wellness examination, your veterinarian will begin to assess your pet's oral health as part of their exam. **Dog teeth cleaning** and **cat teeth cleaning** utilizing daily brushing can be done at home through training and positive reinforcement. Yes it takes recurrent effort on your part and the truth is, some pets are more compliant than others! We try to stress the benefits of brushing your pet's teeth while they are young kittens or puppies as it can be easier to establish this routine when they are little. We have been surprised. An old dog or cat can still learn new tricks, especially when high value rewards are involved. Speaking of treats, [VOHC lists approved](#) treats, chews, and water additives to supplement daily brushing. But remember, brushing with enzymatic pet safe toothpaste is best and nothing else truly replaces it.



## Dental Health is Whole Body Health

The link between the health of your pet's mouth and the rest of their body cannot be understated. We have over 25 years of research supporting the importance of oral health. As practitioners, we aim to keep your pets healthy, happy, and in your lives as long as possible. COHATs play a vital role in the longevity of your pet. Please consider routine professional dental cleanings. As always, we are always here to answer your questions regarding your pet and teeth cleaning. [Let us know how we can help!](#)