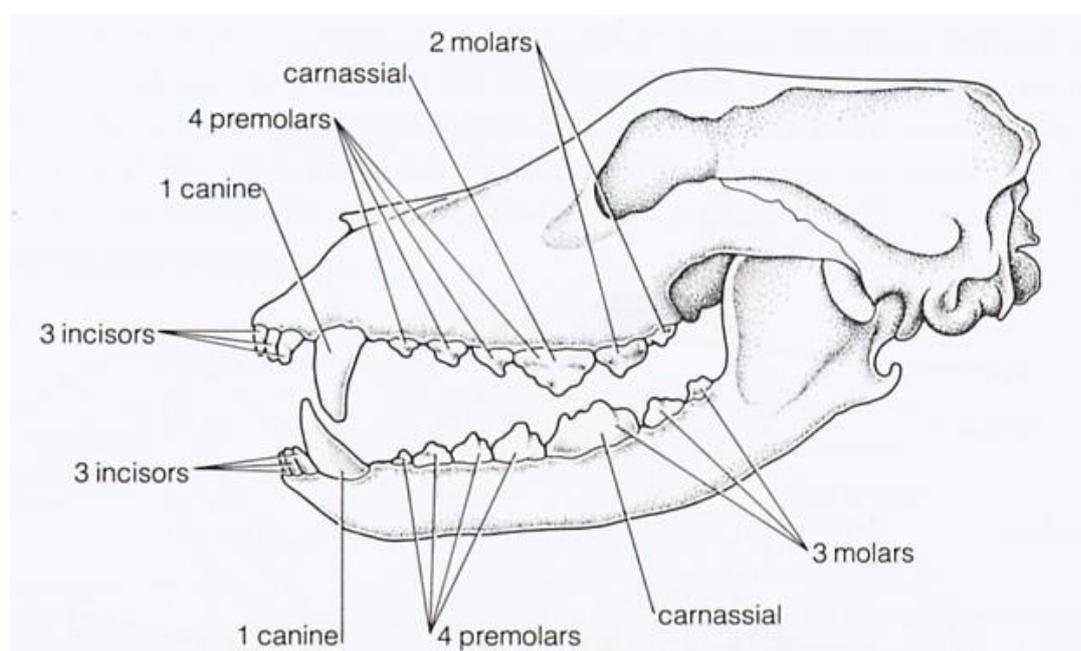


## Dental disease in dogs

Dogs have 42 teeth in total - 12 incisors, 4 canines, 16 premolars and 10 molars



**Deciduous Teeth** - also called 'milk teeth', usually erupt between 3-4 weeks of age. "Teething" begins at 16 weeks and is process by which the deciduous teeth fall out and are replaced with permanent adult teeth. This stage is usually complete by about 6-7 months by can vary among species and breeds.

**Permanent Teeth** – These are the teeth that replace the deciduous teeth after they fall out. They remain in the jaw for the rest of the animal's life. It is therefore extremely important to take good care of them.

### Teeth shape and function

**Incisor** – This tooth is small and pointed with a single root. It can be found at the front of the jaw. The incisor teeth are used for shearing and grooming.

**Canine** – The canine tooth is curved with a large single root. There is one on each side of the upper and lower jaw. They are deeply embedded in the jaw bone. The canines are used for grasping and tearing meat.

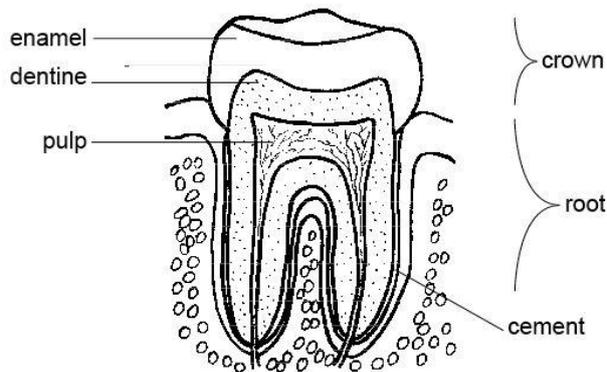
**Premolars and Molars** – Flat surface and with several cusps. This tooth has 2 or 3 roots. They are used for grinding food.

**Carnassial** – The Carnassial tooth is the last upper premolar and the first lower molar on both sides of the jaw. This tooth is the largest tooth in the jaw; they have at least 3 roots.

Cutting and grinding is the main function of the Carnassial teeth.

**Molar** – This tooth has similar properties to the premolars, but larger. They have 3 roots. Molars are needed for shearing and grinding

## Tooth Anatomy



## What is dental disease –

Dental disease is a very variable condition; it can range from mild plaque build-up on the teeth or gingivitis, to a large amount of tartar painful gums and rotten roots.

Bacteria that is found in the tartar can rapidly spread through the body and cause damage to other internal organs, these bacteria can put a strain on the heart, liver and kidneys. Therefore dental disease is not always just a mouth problem.

Dental disease is completely preventable! By feeding a good quality balanced diet to your pet and regular cleaning you can prevent your pet suffering from dental disease.

Dental disease is very common. Around 80% of all dogs over 3 years exhibit signs of dental disease.

### Symptoms of dental disease –

- Smelly breath – note: not all doggy breath is due to dental disease.
- Sore and inflamed gums.
- Plaque build-up: discoloured material sticking to the white enamel surface of the teeth.
- Tartar: this comes after the plaque, it is dark in colour and very hard.
- Mouth pain – this can be sometimes difficult to assess in our pets, but periodontal disease is most definitely painful.

### Preventing and treating dental disease –

Your pet's dental care doesn't rest with your veterinary surgeon alone. As a pet owner, you play a very important role ensuring your pets dental health is regularly maintained and monitored. Your vet

may recommend brushing your pet's teeth. This is one of the most effective ways to combat dental disease.

There are several different ways of treating dental disease at home. You can do this with regular brushing and also by feeding a high quality diet and giving specially shaped dental treats.

### How to brush your pet's teeth.

- **First of all, make sure your pet is used to being handled around the mouth.** When they are relaxed at home, play with their mouths, lifting their lips, stroking them and looking at their teeth. This first step is the most important, and it may take some weeks before they are totally happy.



- **Next, get them used to the flavour of the pet toothpastes.** The toothpastes are flavoured and most animals will take to them readily.
- **Introduce the brushing.** Either with a toothbrush or a finger brush. Start with just a couple of teeth and progress until

you are brushing all the teeth at every session. Also, try to brush all four sides of the teeth when you are brushing.

- **Try to brush the teeth at least every other day.** The harmful plaque that attacks the gums will build up to toxic levels in only 2 days.
- **Always give your pet a treat** after they have had their teeth brushed, and make lots of fuss of them. It will be easier for you both if your pet enjoys having their teeth brushed.
- **Persevere!!** It is not easy to get an animal to accept having its teeth brushed, but it is not impossible, take it slowly and keep going. The benefits are enormous.
- **Make it fun!** Always give you animal lots of praise and treat them after you have finished. They should find having their teeth brushed a positive experience

### Remember!

Your veterinary surgery is an excellent source of information on dental disease. Routine dental check-ups are common in most veterinary practices. Your veterinary nurse will be more than happy to carry out these routine dental checks, allowing the early stages of dental disease to be identified.

**All dogs deserve good oral care; the main thing to remember is prevention is better than cure!**