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## **Consumer's Guide to Feline Oral Health**

One of the most devastating diseases that a cat can develop during its lifetime is dental disease. Unfortunately, dental disease in its various stages is also one of the most common problems we see in our patients here. However, through appropriate preventative measures and timely treatment of problems, we can deal with this problem before it presents a serious threat to your cat's health.

At Alta View Animal Hospital, we are very proud of the advanced level of dental services that we provide for our patients. Our doctors have received additional training in dental techniques, and some of the staff has trained under the direction of a board-certified veterinary dentist and maxillofacial surgeon. This level of training has allowed us to offer the latest and best care in veterinary dentistry.

You may be reading this because we have recommended that your cat receive a dental procedure, and we have provided you with a treatment plan and fee estimate. We appreciate that you want to consider all of your options when you are faced with a major decision about your cat's health, and we encourage you to ensure that your cat is receiving the highest level of care. When deciding where to have your cat's dental procedure performed, make sure that you ask the following questions:

### ***What type of anesthesia will my cat receive during the procedure, and what precautions do you take to minimize risk to my cat during the procedure?***

At Alta View Animal Hospital, your cat's safety is our first concern. All patients receive a **thorough physical examination** prior to any anesthetic being administered, and depending on your cat's age and health status, **laboratory tests** are run to assess your cat's ability to process and metabolize the anesthetic drugs. An **intravenous (IV) catheter** is placed prior to anesthesia for the administration of drugs and fluids, as well as to provide the ability to rapidly administer treatment should your cat have a problem while under anesthesia. **IV fluids** are given to your cat during the procedure to maintain normal blood pressure and to ensure that there is good circulation to vital organs such as the kidneys. **Injectable and inhalant anesthetics** are used in combination to provide a level of safety similar to what you find in human hospitals. An **endotracheal (breathing) tube** is used to provide oxygen and inhalant anesthetics to your cat, while at the same time protecting the airways and lungs from water and debris that accumulate in the mouth during the procedure. A veterinary technician, under the direct supervision of the attending veterinarian, uses **state-of-the-art body function monitors**, including pulse oximetry and blood pressure measurement, to closely monitor your cat.

### ***What kind of equipment do you use for dental procedures?***

At Alta View Animal Hospital, we use both power and hand instruments during our dental procedures. Dental scaling (removal of accumulated plaque and tartar) is accomplished using a combination of a hand scaler along with a state-of-the-art ultrasonic water scaler. The teeth are polished using a high-speed polishing cup virtually identical to the one that your dentist uses on you. If extractions or other procedures are required, we have a high-speed dental drill with a full assortment of bits and burrs to make sure that the job is done correctly and completely. We routinely use dental radiography to take x-rays of the teeth and surrounding bone to ensure that the roots are healthy, and to identify problems below the gum line so that they can be treated. We use digital radiography in our dental suite so that we can take our x-rays faster and even transmit them to specialists for review if necessary.

***What kind of post-cleaning treatment do you do to help slow and prevent the reoccurrence of dental disease?***

At Alta View Animal Hospital, all of our patients receive fluoride treatment after the teeth are scaled and polished. We also use Ora-Vet: a new dental sealant that helps to reduce plaque build-up on teeth after your cat goes home. We have Ora- Vet kits for home use as well, and we encourage its use once weekly.

***My cat may require extractions of one or more teeth. Doesn't that hurt? What pain control do you provide?***

At Alta View Animal Hospital, we take the comfort of our patients very seriously. Extractions and other surgical procedures in the mouth are often painful after your cat wakes up. We include pain medications in our anesthetic protocols to prevent your cat from experiencing pain upon waking up. In certain cases, we will use a pain patch applied to the skin to provide several days of pain relief. We believe that it is never acceptable for a cat to be in pain, and we take immediate action to prevent and manage pain and discomfort that can occur from dental procedures and oral surgery.

***What kind of follow-up care do you provide after the dental procedure? Will you advise me on how to minimize and prevent recurrence of dental disease in my cat?***

At Alta View Animal Hospital, we routinely schedule a follow-up appointment at no charge after any kind of oral surgery to evaluate the healing process and ensure that everything is going well. We are happy to address any questions or concerns you may have about your cat, before or after the procedure. We are also very proactive in advising you on how to take care of your cat's oral health at home. Although we have the expertise and the equipment to deal with some of the worst dental problems, it *always* makes us smile to see our patients with healthy mouths.

We invite you to compare our standards to any veterinary facility; once you evaluate the level of care that your cat will receive at Alta View Animal Hospital, we believe that your decision will be clear.