

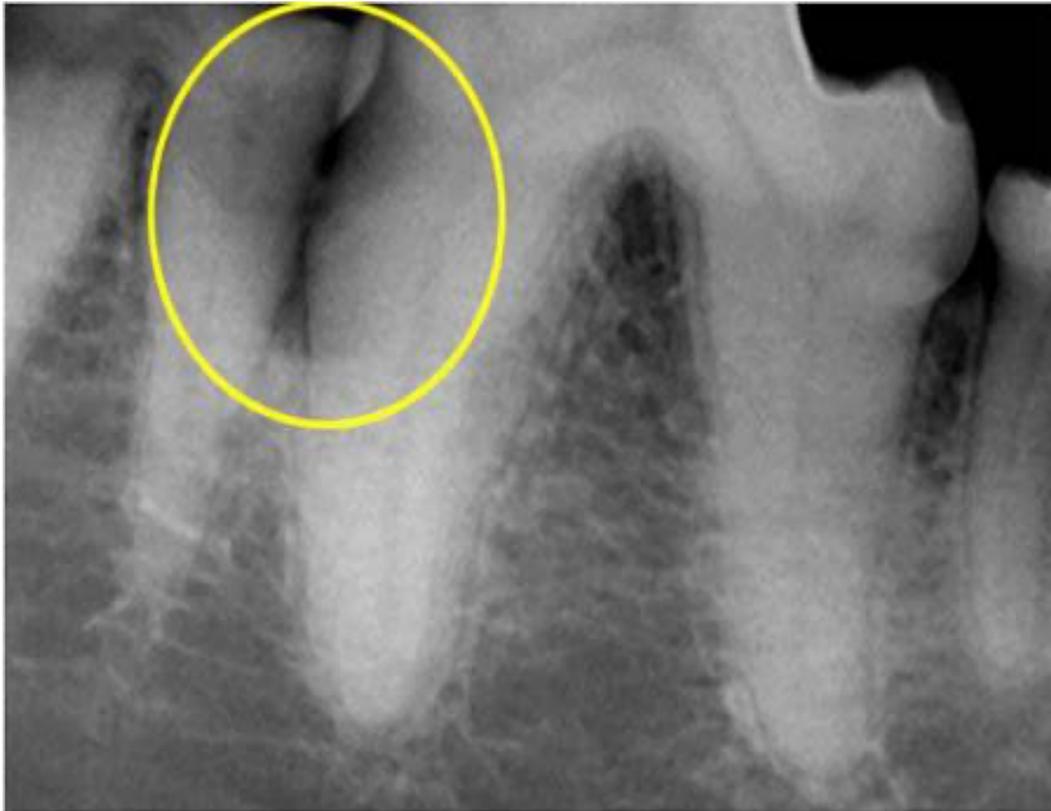
Periodontal Disease in Dogs and Cats

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What Is Periodontal Disease?



Radiograph by Dr. Jan Bellows

Periodontal disease is inflammation of some or all of a tooth's support. Compared to gingivitis, periodontitis indicates bone loss. Periodontitis may cause loose, painful teeth and internal disease if left untreated.

What Causes Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal disease is caused by plaque (bacteria). Bacteria are attracted to the tooth surface within hours of cleaning. Within days, the plaque becomes mineralized and produces calculus. As plaque ages and gingivitis develops, periodontitis (bone loss) occurs.

What Are The Signs?

Halitosis, or bad breath, is the primary sign of periodontal disease. Dogs' and cats' breath should not have a disagreeable odor. The inability to chew hard food and excessive drooling with or without blood may occur when periodontal disease advances.

How Is Periodontal Disease Diagnosed?

Bone loss from periodontal disease occurs below the gum line. To evaluate the stage of the disease and the best treatment, your pet must be examined under general anesthesia. In addition to a visual examination, X-rays and instruments to measure bone loss are used.

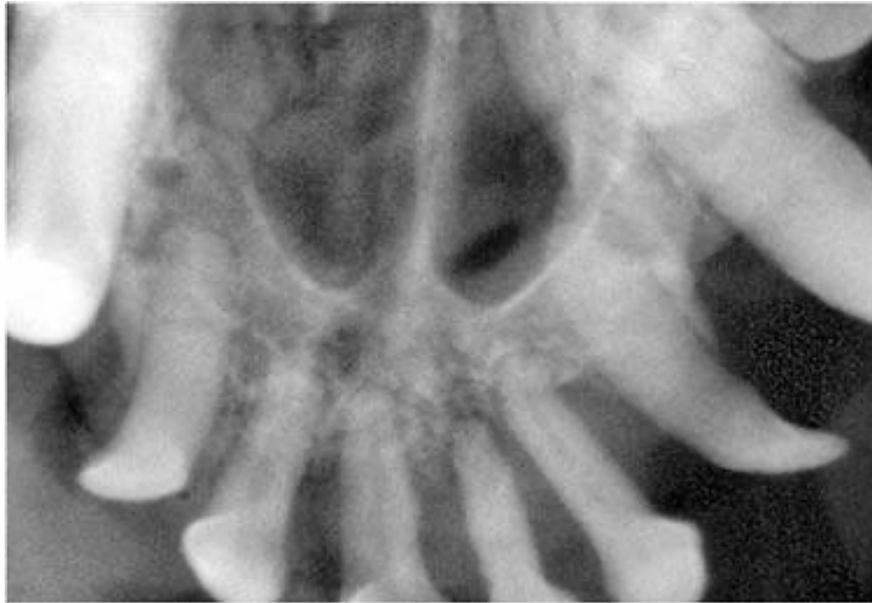
Periodontal disease is measured in stages:

- Stage 1:



Photo by Dr. Jan Bellows

- gingivitis
- Stage 2:
early



Radiograph by Dr. Jan Bellows

- periodontitis-less than 25% support loss
- Stage 3: established periodontitis- between 25-50% support loss
- Stage 4: advanced periodontitis- greater than 50% support loss

How Is Periodontal Disease Treated?

Treatment depends on the severity of the disease. Stage 1 gingivitis can be treated by teeth cleaning, polishing, application of fluoride to help plaque accumulation, and applying OraVet plaque prevention gel. Stage 2 disease will require deep scaling and the application of a local antimicrobial if a pocket exists. Stage 3 disease is treated similarly in cases where the owner can provide, and the pet can accept daily plaque control at home. Once stage 4 disease occurs, dental scaling and/or surgery is necessary to treat the affected teeth through specific procedures or extraction.

Daily plaque control through tooth brushing is the key to helping prevent periodontal disease. Special foods and treats are also available to help control calculus. Some products are approved by the [Veterinary Oral](#)

[Health Council.](#)

What Is The Prognosis For Periodontal Disease?

Gingivitis is treatable and curable with daily tooth brushing. Periodontal disease is not curable once bone loss occurs but may be controllable once treated and followed up with strict home care.



Photo by Dr. Jan Bellows

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