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DENTAL AND ORAL SURGERY FOR PETS

This informational page is an attempt to describe a complex subject in limited space. It should be considered to be very introductory. More in-depth discussions of this and many other subjects can be found on the Old CUSP Articles page at www.toothvet.ca. You are encouraged to visit and make use of the resources there and elsewhere on my website.

Feline Chronic Gingivo-Stomatitis

Cats are mysterious creatures and as such are afflicted with some mysterious ailments. One such disease has had a number of names over the years and this is a reflection of how little we truly know about this condition. The currently accepted name among veterinary dentists is *Feline Chronic Gingivo-Stomatitis (FCGS)*.

Most cats have some degree of *gingivitis* (inflammation of the gum tissue) and many also have *periodontal disease* (deeper infection of the tissues below the gum line). An unfortunate few have a much more dramatic oral inflammatory disease.

There are no specific tests or diagnostic criteria for FCGS. The diagnosis is usually arrived at under the following circumstances:

- there is oral inflammation that seems well out of proportion with the amount of plaque and tartar,
- the inflammation extends beyond the gingiva into other tissues lining the mouth,
- inflammation is present or persistent in areas where there are no teeth,
- the inflammation extends into the back of the mouth and into the throat and under the back of the tongue,
- the inflammation persists or returns rapidly after a thorough dental cleaning or courses of medication.

We do not know what causes FCGS. Many things have been blamed but there is no evidence to support any specific bacteria, virus or allergy as the cause.

The only statement that the evidence supports is that:

It is an abnormal local immune-system response of unknown origin.

Since we do not know the cause, we cannot offer a cure. We can, however, offer a treatment strategy that brings relief to a large majority of cats with FCGS. That treatment is extraction of all teeth and removal of any retained root remnants. This procedure should also include smoothing of the bone and removal of much of the inflamed soft tissue prior to suturing the wounds closed.

While this treatment may seem extreme, it truly is the very best chance for lasting and meaningful relief for these cats. Attempts to manage FCGS with medication results in frustration, continued suffering and the addition of drug side effects. It has been observed that the longer whole-mouth extraction is delayed, the worse the prognosis for getting the inflammation to resolve. The longer the mouth is inflamed before extraction, the longer it will remain inflamed after extraction.

The good news is that domestic cats do NOT need teeth. Pet cats do not need to hunt and kill their own food or chew raw meat from a carcass. But they do need and deserve a mouth free of pain and inflammation and for cats with FCGS, the only way to achieve and maintain that is with whole mouth extraction – sooner than later.

