

Greyhound Dental Care

Ensuring optimal health and performance by preventing periodontitis



DENTAL SCORING CHART

<p>GRADE 1</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Plaque and calculus deposit B. Inflamed gingiva C. Zero bone loss <p>Marginal gingivitis Mild plaque and calculus Reversible with scale/polish</p>
<p>GRADE 2</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Plaque and calculus extend down B. Pocket forming C. Mild bone loss <p>Gingival recession Plaque and calculus extend to root Furcation exposure Mild bone loss greater than 25% Possible furcation exposure</p>
<p>GRADE 3</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Plaque and calculus extend down B. Deepening pocket C. Extensive bone reduction <p>Ulcerated gingiva Plaque and calculus further down 25 - 50% bone loss Possible furcation exposure</p>
<p>GRADE 4</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Plaque and calculus extend down B. Deepening pocket C. Extensive bone reduction D. Severe bone and gum loss <p>Significant loss of gingiva > 50% bone loss, tooth mobility</p>

GREYHOUND WELFARE STANDARDS

Standard 1 of GRNZ's Greyhound Welfare Standards sets out the minimum standards for greyhound health and care that must be adhered to by Licensed Persons (LPs) responsible for the care of greyhounds, and includes the topics of monitoring health and veterinary care.

LPs must monitor the dental health of all greyhounds in their care and seek veterinary treatment immediately if signs of dental disease are present. See Dental Scoring Chart at Appendix 2.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.24

LPs must ensure that greyhounds in their care undergo, at least, an annual veterinary examination, which may be at the time of vaccination, and which includes a full physical and dental examination. Records of annual veterinary examinations must be kept.

Greyhound Welfare Standard 1.28

WHAT CAUSES PERIODONTITIS?

Periodontitis is common in dogs and can be caused by a lack of dental care which leads to a build-up of plaque on the teeth. The disease starts with bacteria in the mouth which get under the gum line causing inflammation and cause destruction of the gum tissue, the underlying bony tooth socket and other structures. Severe periodontal disease can result in dental abscess formation or tooth loss; infection spreading via the bloodstream to the heart, kidneys and other organs as well as ongoing pain, discomfort and poor condition.

The longer plaque stays on the teeth, the more it accumulates and hardens with minerals to form calculus or tartar. This occurs after only three days of plaque build-up.

Greyhounds can have a genetic predisposition to periodontitis. This means that in some gene lines, the greyhound's own immune system targets the gum disease and extra immune-mediated inflammation adds to the pain and swelling associated with periodontitis. These dogs have very painful mouths, swollen gums and lips. In some severe cases, extracting all the teeth is the only way to permanently cure this condition.

HOW DO I IDENTIFY PERIODONTITIS?

The first stage is what we see as gum disease or gingivitis. This is redness and swelling of the gums - they may bleed more easily and often the dog has smelly breath. This stage is reversible with dental care.

The second stage is tooth disease or periodontitis, which is inflammation of the deeper structures of the teeth and jaw bones. The damage caused by periodontitis is irreversible.

Dogs with normal looking gums may still have some level of deeper periodontitis. It can only be diagnosed by a veterinarian using dental instruments and dental x-rays during general anaesthetic. Unless there is excessive calculus present, it can be difficult to know whether your dog has periodontitis, this makes **routine preventative dental care** so important.

It is wise to seek veterinary advice if your greyhound has or is the following:

- smelly breath
- red, swollen or bleeding gums
- excessive tartar or calculus
- lack of appetite or not wanting to drink
- reluctant to play with or chew toys (if previously would)
- dropping food from its mouth
- pawing or rubbing at its face regularly
- reluctant or pulls away when you attempt to touch near its mouth or face, for example when placing or removing a race muzzle
- “chattering” teeth
- swelling under the eye (this may be a tooth root abscess)
- discoloured or broken teeth.

HOW DO I PREVENT PERIODONTITIS?

Routine preventative dental care is the answer. Ask your veterinarian for further advice, especially if signs of periodontitis are present.

Dental care at home includes:

- daily tooth brushing
- use of dental rinses (chlorhexidine rinses and gels are available)
- dental chews
- diet i.e. specific dental dry kibble (not moistened) or large meaty bones.

A greyhound’s annual veterinary health check must include a thorough dental examination.