

# My “last Vet” told me Shadow’s mouth was fine!

**Now six months later he has abscessed teeth. How is this possible?**

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It seems unbelievable to clients that their companions have developed serious dental problems until they see and smell the problem or observe acute signs of discomfort. Facial swellings, fistulas and dental pulp exposure are common presentations at the Animal Dental Center. Many of these problems present acutely, however they are often manifestations of chronic periodontal or endodontic disease conditions.

Many dental and oral conditions are not recognized during routine “wellness exams”. Many dental problems are observed, however they are not addressed. The problems not addressed may be due to the frequency they are observed in general practice and they do not appear to be clinically significant. Dogs typically won’t display pain and they will usually eat even if they are painful! So **we must expand our index of concern**, even when patients are not exhibiting discomfort. Over time, progression of pathology often results in clinical signs. Unfortunately, as disease processes progress, the treatment options dwindle and the risk of systemic sequelae are increased. Dental conditions may not be addressed to prioritize more urgent problems or for financial limitations. If your practice does not provide the necessary services, encourage a referral to optimize patient care. Clients appreciate you for offering referrals. Client loyalty is clear when they tell others how much you care for their pets! **I offer my dental and oral surgery services as part of your professional team!**

## **How can you avoid being the “last vet” that didn’t recognize or address a condition the client is concerned about?**

I think that if we “believe in dentistry”, expand our knowledge base and strengthen our communication skills, there is little chance we will have clients leave our practice as a result of unrecognized or unaddressed dental problems. Clients want thorough care for their pets and treatment options for problems.

**It's not a matter of belief;** it's a fact that dental problems are important and veterinary dental care provides significant benefits for our patients. I strongly encourage that each practice consider a “paradigm shift” in providing dental care for our patients and education for the owners.

### **Recommendations:**

- A certified veterinary technician or veterinarian must always **be involved** in teeth cleaning procedures.
- **Oral examinations** include periodontal probing, intraoral radiographs and photographs of potential problems.
- **The dental chart** records every abnormal observation.
- **Use the dental chart** as a client education tool (to avoid future client surprises) and to compare the patient’s current oral health status to prior evaluations.
- **Inform clients** of their pets’ oral health conditions and treatment options. Motivate them to brush their pets’ teeth.
- Every time dental and oral surgery questions arise, Call 920-233-8409, 888-598-6684, or 414-540-6710