Steps to a Professional Cleaning

Preparation

Before a proper professional cleaning can begin, it is essential to have the right equipment and instrumentation. **Safety first** - The person performing the dental cleaning must at a minimum wear goggles, mask, and gloves. Anyone in the immediate area should also be wearing a mask. Second, make sure the equipment is ready to be used. Is it clean? Are the water bottles filled? Is the compressor working properly? Test the equipment before the animal is anesthetized.

Instrumentation

At a minimum, a dental cleaning kit should have a sterilized hand scaler, curette, mirror and probe/explorer. Each instrument has a unique function. Scalers and curettes should be held in a modified pencil grasp. The hand scaler has two working edges and a sharp point. This instrument is used for supragingival scaling only, and pull strokes should be in a coronal fashion. The curette is a versatile instrument and can be used on the crown and below the gum line. It is double ended with mirror images at each end. It has two working edges and a rounded toe. The mirror has many purposes but is mainly used in reflection. It may also be used to reflect light into a dark area, photography, and retracting cheek tissue. The probe explorer is by far the most important instrument in the oral examination. This instrument allows the user to probe for cavities and open pulp chambers, as well as, measuring sulcus depths, pockets, oral masses, and gingival recession.

There are three types of power scalers: rotary, sonic, ultrasonic. Rotary and sonic scalers turn air into mechanical vibration. The ultrasonic power scalers convert sound waves into mechanical vibration. Each type of power scaler works differently.

Rotary scalers have more disadvantages than advantages so they are no longer recommended. They are prone to damaging the enamel of the tooth and must be replaced often because they become dull quickly.

Sonic scalers use compressed air to create a circle-of-eight motion. They are less likely to cause heat damage because the compressed air helps with cooling. All sides of the working end are active, but may not have equal power.

The most common power scalers are the ultrasonic type. There are two branches of ultrasonic power scalers: magnetostrictive and peizoelectric. These types of scalers turn energy from a power source into a sound wave and cause mechanical vibration. Two types of magnetostrictive scalers are ferrite rod and metal strips/stacks. The ferrite rods move in a circular vibration so all sides are active and have equal power. The stack type move in an elliptical pattern with active vibration on all sides, however the power is not always equal. Piezoelectric scalers use crystals to convert energy into wide back and forth vibration about 3mm of the tip is active.
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Step One – Oral Cavity Assessment

Take a good look at the oral cavity to see if there are any obvious areas of concern. Avoid cleaning in the area of an oral tumor or in very painful areas until the patient is in a steady plane of general anesthesia.

Step Two - Rinse the Oral Cavity

Rinse the oral cavity with 0.12% chlorhexadine rinse prior to the professional teeth cleaning. The oral cavity has normal flora of gram positive and negative cocci and rods. The use of 0.12% chlorhexadine rinse will reduce the amount of aerosolized bacterial in the environment immediately surrounding the dental cleaning.

Step Three – Remove Supragingival Calculus

Calculus is the mineralized plaque that adheres to the tooth. The calculus is a plaque retentive area that is most easily removed with a power scaler. Using a power scaler begin to remove the supragingival calculus. It is important to know what type of power scaler is being used. There are three types of power scalers: rotary, sonic, and ultrasonic. Each scaler works in a different way. (POWER SCALER INFORMATION) Once the calculus has been removed it is important to lavage the oral cavity and dry the teeth with gauze. Left behind calculus that has been dried turns a chalky white color and is very easy to see and remove with a hand scaler.

Step Four– Remove Subgingival Calculus

Using the right instruments is for removing subgingival calculus. Any residual plaque or calculus allows bacteria to easily adhere to the tooth surface and long term benefits of a professional teeth cleaning will be lost. Ultrasonic scalers with subgingival tips may be used under the gum line. Make sure to use the right settings. Hand curettes are used above and below the gum line. Gently place the curette under the gingiva and pull coronally. Repeat until the calculus and plaque below the gum line has been removed.

Step Five – Lavage

Using the three way syringe rinse the oral cavity with distilled water. This will remove rinse away debris from the oral cavity.

Step Six– Polishing
Polishing is a very important to a professional dental cleaning. Power and hand scalers leave micro etchings behind in the enamel of the tooth surface. There are two types of polishing paste. Commercial polishing paste is premixed and typically flavored. Pumice is granular substance that is mixed with water and used as a polishing paste. A low speed hand piece with a prophy angle and cup is used with paste to smooth out the enamel. The cup should be flared slightly to reach subgingivally. Heat is generated from the friction of the tooth and prophy cup so a liberal amount of paste should be used to cool the tooth.

Step Seven – Final Lavage

Prophy paste or pumice left in the sulcus of a tooth can be irritating and should be rinsed away completely. This is also the time to remove any remaining debris from the oral cavity.

Step Eight – Oral Examination and Charting

A complete oral examination should be completed by a trained professional with the knowledge of what a normal oral cavity looks like. Each tooth should be probed for sulcus depth and any abnormalities should be noted in the chart.

Step Nine – Radiographs

Any abnormalities noted should be radiographed while the patient is under general anesthesia. Radiographs are a part of the medical record and should be documented. If the client declines a service, documentation has been made regarding treatment options.

Step Ten – Fluoride Treatment

Not every hospital uses a fluoride treatment. In humans fluoride is known to strengthen enamel, decrease sensitivity, and slow the attachment of plaque. This has not been proven in dogs and cats.