

OCCURRENCE OF DENTAL AFFECTIONS IN DOGS – A STUDY IN 150 CASES

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Dental problems constituted 68% of canine cases. Dental Tartar (89.22%), followed by epulis (4.9%), oral ulcer (3.92%) and dental attrition (1.96%) were the dental problems recorded. Occurrence of various dental problems in dogs with reference to age, breed, sex and feeding habits were analyzed and discussed.

Key words: Dental disease, dogs

Introduction

Oral cavity is the beginning of digestive tract and has a paramount role in determining the pet's health. Dental disorders are of major clinical importance in the dogs but often underrated. Dental plaque, which turn to form dental tartar and eventually to periodontal disease, is considered as the *numero uno* dental problem in canines (Kyllar and Witter, 2005). This, if not treated in time may lead to severe pain, defective mastication, loss of teeth and may cause halitosis which makes the dog socially unacceptable. Dental disorders may also affect remote organs like heart, kidney and liver by spreading infections systemically (Glickman *et al.* 2009). Plaque is considered as a diet related disorder. A soft or a minced diet favour rapid accumulation of dental plaque and calculus. Many other factors like age, breed, chewing habits and occlusion can predispose the condition (Carmichael, 2006).

Materials and methods

Among the dogs presented to the Surgery units of Veterinary College Hospitals, Mannuthy and Kokkalai during a period from April 2008 to December 2008 and belonging to different age, breeds and of both sexes, were screened at random for dental affections. A detailed database was gathered to study the occurrence of dental and periodontal affections, and their relation to age, breed, sex, diet and food habits with the help of a questionnaire. The data thus gathered were statistically analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Out of the 150 dogs screened, 102 dogs (68%) were found affected with dental or periodontal problems. Among them the *Indian Journal of Canine Practice*

occurrence of types of affections, age, breed and sex wise incidence and its relation to the diet were studied.

Incidence of dental disease

The incidence of dental tartar was found high *i.e.*, 91 dogs (89.22%), followed by epulis in five (4.9%), oral ulcer in four (3.92%) and dental attrition in two (1.96%). Comparable result was reported by Kumar *et al.* (2008).

Age-wise incidence of dental disease

Among the 102 dogs affected with dental disorders 38 dogs (37.25%) belonged to the age group of one to four years, 46 dogs (45.09%) belonged to the age group of five to eight years and 18 dogs (17.65%) to the age group of nine to twelve years. Higher incidence of dental affections above the age of two years was reported by Vani *et al.* (2007) and Kortegaard *et al.* (2008).

Breed-wise incidence of dental disease

Out of 102 cases of dental affections, the incidence was maximum in German Shepherd Dog with 27 numbers (26.47 %), followed by Spitz with 21 dogs (20.59%), Dachshund with 15 (14.71 %), Labrador Retriever with 12 (11.76 %), Non-descript dogs with nine (8.82 %), Dobermann Pinscher with five (4.90 %), Cocker Spaniel with four (3.92 %), Rottweiler and Chinese Pug with two each (1.96 %) and Boxer, Great Dane, Basset hound, Lhasa Apso and Miniature Pinscher with one each (0.98 %). The distribution of the disease may be affected by the population of dogs in the given area. Comparable results were reported by Vani *et al.* (2007) and Kumar *et al.* (2008).

Sex-wise incidence of dental diseases

Of the affected dogs 53 (51.96 %) were females and 49 (48.04 %) were males. The finding was in accordance to the report of Vani *et al.* (2007) and Kumar *et al.* (2008).

Diet and incidence of dental diseases

Type of Major Diet: Of all the dogs screened, 90.0% of the dogs were fed with homemade food alone and 4% with commercial food alone. A combination of homemade and commercial food was fed to 6% of the animals. Incidence of dental affection was 71.1% among those fed with homemade food and 50% among those fed with commercial food. Lesser incidence of dental problems with those dogs fed with dry food was reported by Golden *et al.* (1982). It was attributed to the abrasive nature of the dry food which removed the plaque from the crown of the teeth (Eisner, 1989 and Vani *et al.*, 2007).

Dog's preference for food: Among all the dogs screened, 40.67% were fed with purely non-vegetarian diet and 5.33% with vegetarian diet. Both non-vegetarian and vegetarian foods were included in the diet in 54% of the dogs. The incidence of dental affection was more in those fed with mixed diet (75.31 %) where as it was 62.3 % in dogs fed purely on non-vegetarian diet and 37.5% among those fed exclusively with vegetarian diet.

Titbits: Titbits like bread, biscuits and sweets were fed to 36.67% pets, apart from the major food, while 63.33% of dogs were not fed with titbits. Among the dogs fed with titbits, the incidence of dental affection was 81.8% and it was 42.26 % among the dogs which were not fed with titbits.

Feeding of bone: Among the dogs screened, 31.34% were fed with bones daily, 34% weekly, 5.33% monthly and 29.33% were not at all fed with bones. Among the dogs fed with bones daily, the incidence of dental affections was 44.68 %, whereas it was 74.50% among those fed bones weekly and 100% among those fed monthly. Among the dogs which were not fed with bone, the incidence of dental affection was 78.72%.

Conclusion

The dental affections are very much higher in incidence and are often left unattended

by most of the dog owners. Dental tartar and subsequent periodontal diseases are more in dogs of middle age without any specific relation to breed or sex. But dogs fed with soft homemade diets are affected more compared to those fed with dry commercial foods. As the dental diseases can cause serious impacts on the general health and longevity of pets, owners shall be made aware of the importance of dental health of their pets and dental check-up must be included in the general health check up protocols of the dogs.

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