

### DENTAL ANESTHESIA- THE TRUTH

I've never seen such a look of betrayal as was in Tomkin's eyes when he came home from the groomer. Traumatized by the poking, prodding, bright lights, and sharp tools, he covered in his corner, refusing even his favorite treats. It took days before he finally showed his sparkly new grin, and I knew I could never subject him to a non-anesthetic dental cleaning again.



The *2013 AAHA Dental Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats* clearly state “cleaning a companion animal’s teeth without general anesthesia is considered **unacceptable and below the standard of care.**” This means the pain and stress a pet faces during a non-anesthetic dental cleaning are so great that to subject your pet to this type of procedure when safer, more comfortable methods are available is considered cruel. Thankfully, the use of anesthesia and a personalized pain control plan can mitigate many of the risks associated with non-anesthetic procedures.

Pets rely on their owners to provide for their needs. When dogs and cats undergo a non-anesthetic dental cleaning, they can often be overwhelmed by the bright lights and strange people restraining them. This can place your pet under significant stress and even cause lasting trauma. Anesthetized dental procedures allow your pet to rest comfortably while the veterinary team performs a thorough exam and cleaning without the risk of injury to himself or others.

Anesthesia also allows your veterinarian to properly evaluate your pet’s teeth. Did you know that 60 percent of a dog or cat’s tooth is hidden beneath the gum line? Dental X-rays obtained while the pet is under anesthesia allow the veterinarian to fully examine each tooth and identify problems that cannot be seen with the naked eye—and additional treatment can often be provided on the spot.

So, what should you expect when your pet undergoes general anesthesia? First, your veterinarian will want to examine your pet and perform a blood test to ensure there are no health issues prior to the procedure. Based on the results and your pet’s medical history, your veterinarian will create a customized plan and anesthetic protocol for your pet.

Most pets recover from anesthesia quickly. According to the [American Veterinary Dental College \(AVDC\)](#), many patients are fully recovered—meaning they are awake and standing—just 20-30 minutes after the procedure is completed. Anesthetized dental cleanings are also an outpatient procedure, so your pet can go home with you the same day.

Just like humans, pets are at risk for cavities, periodontal disease, and broken teeth—all of which are sources of significant pain. By taking your dog or cat in for an anesthetized dental procedure in which the veterinary team can thoroughly examine and clean all their teeth safely, you ensure a healthy, happy future for your pet.