



CONVERSATION TREE: Discuss **DENTAL CARE** for **SENIOR PETS**

As pets age, their owners may resist dental care, insisting their pets are too old for anesthesia or offering up other myths when they turn down the care you recommend. Consider these tips to explain the value of dental care at every stage of life, including the golden years.

Client: My dog Bella is older, and I don't think anesthesia for dental care is such a good idea.

You: Mr. Smith, as pets age, they may become more susceptible to inflammatory and infectious diseases. And periodontal disease is a constant source of infection and pain. We know you want what's best for Bella, and the dental care we're recommending is for Bella's longterm health.

Client: OK, if you think Bella needs it.

You: I do. Bella is a very lucky dog to have you looking out for her.

Client: I'm not so sure Bella should undergo anesthesia. Her teeth don't look that bad to me.

You: Mr. Smith, we have safer anesthetic agents, including ones that can be reversed, better monitoring systems and properly trained team members to decrease the risk of anesthetic complications. We will provide pain control before surgery, during the procedure by means of nerve blocks and postoperatively to prevent any discomfort. Taking good care of Bella is very important to us.

Client: No way. I'm not going to risk Bella's life.

Client: Well, I'm not comfortable making this decision today without my (spouse, friend, parent). I'll think about it.

You: Great! I have a few handouts here you can take with you to explain the dental care we're recommending for Bella. I'll plan to call you tomorrow after you've had a chance to talk to (spouse, friend, parent) to see if you have any additional questions I can answer.

Client: My last dog Harley lived to be 19 years old and never had a dental cleaning.

You: Harley sounds like a special pet, and we'd love to help you keep Bella healthy so you can enjoy the most time together. Senior pets not only suffer from periodontal disease, but also from tooth wear, tooth resorption and oral cancer. These conditions are progressive and need to be evaluated by a veterinarian. I'd like to send you home with handouts that explain the dental care we'd like to offer and plan to call you later to answer any questions you have.

Once you've finished your conversation with the client, make sure to follow up with a call, email or note that offers any information you promised and includes a message about how it's never too late to take care of a pet's teeth and gums. Then invite them to call or write you with any additional questions or concerns they have.

Client: I guess that's OK.