

(AVDC Position Statement Continued from Inside)

- Professional dental scaling includes scaling the surfaces of the teeth both above and below the gingival margin (gum line), followed by dental polishing. The most critical part of a dental scaling procedure is scaling the tooth surfaces that are within the gingival pocket (the subgingival space between the gum and the root), where periodontal disease is active. Because the patient cooperates, dental scaling of human teeth performed by a professional trained in the procedures can be completed successfully without anesthesia. However, access to the subgingival area of every tooth is impossible in an unanesthetized canine or feline patient. Removal of dental tartar on the visible surfaces of the teeth has little effect on a pet's health, and provides a false sense of accomplishment. The effect is purely cosmetic.
- Inhalation anesthesia using a cuffed endotracheal tube provides three important advantages – the cooperation of the patient with a procedure it does not understand, elimination of pain resulting from examination and treatment of affected dental tissues during the procedure, and protection of the airway and lungs from accidental aspiration.
- A complete oral examination, which is an important part of a professional dental scaling procedure, is not possible in an unanesthetized patient. The surfaces of the teeth facing the tongue cannot be examined, and areas of disease and discomfort are likely to be missed. Safe use of an anesthetic or sedative in a dog or cat requires evaluation of the general health and size of the patient to determine the appropriate drug and dose, and continual monitoring of the patient. Veterinarians are trained in all of these procedures. Prescribing or administering anesthetic or sedative drugs by a non- veterinarian can be very dangerous, and is illegal.

Although anesthesia will never be 100% risk-free, modern anesthetic and patient evaluation techniques used in veterinary hospitals minimize the risks, and millions of dental scaling procedures are safely performed each year in veterinary hospitals.

To minimize the need for professional dental scaling procedures and to maintain optimal oral health, the AVDC recommends daily dental home care from an early age. This should include brushing or use of other effective techniques to retard accumulation of dental plaque, such as dental diets and chew materials. This, combined with periodic examination of the patient by a veterinarian and with dental scaling under anesthesia when indicated, will optimize life-long oral health for dogs and cats.

For general information on performance of dental procedures on veterinary patients, please read the AVDC Position Statement on Veterinary Dental Healthcare Providers, which is available on the AVDC web site ([www.AVDC.org](http://www.AVDC.org)). For information on effective oral hygiene products for dogs and cats, visit the Veterinary Oral Health Council web site ([www.VOHC.org](http://www.VOHC.org)).

For further information, send an e-mail message to the AVDC Executive Secretary ([ExecSec@AVDC.org](mailto:ExecSec@AVDC.org)).

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**The  
Nevada  
Veterinary Medical Association  
Warns of the Perils  
of  
Anesthesia-Free  
Dentistry  
in Dogs and Cats**



## The Perils of Anesthesia-Free Dentistry in Dogs and Cats



This cosmetic practice originated in grooming facilities and was thought abandoned years ago. Recently, a few companies have attempted a resurgence of this practice in veterinary hospitals in California, Florida, New York,

Delaware, Georgia, South Carolina, **and now in Nevada.**

It is a cosmetic procedure that does not treat periodontal disease, but gives the pet owner the false assumption they have done something to combat disease. Medical reports and public complaints have exposed the pain and physical damage dogs and cats have suffered due to this poor practice.

The American Animal Hospital Association, the American Veterinary Dental College, and the Nevada Veterinary Medical Association are speaking out against this practice by warning veterinarians and the public not to be fooled by clever advertising. This practice has no place in veterinary medicine.

Nevadans should learn from the following experiences in California.

Source: [http://www.mypetsdentist.com/site/view/146405\\_Anesthesiafreedentistry.pml](http://www.mypetsdentist.com/site/view/146405_Anesthesiafreedentistry.pml)

*In California, anesthesia-free dentistry has resulted in complaints by the public and the California Veterinary Medical Board has taken action. Some of those complaints were:*

- *A consumer complained that their pet was taken for non-anesthesia dental services for five consecutive years and the owner felt misled that the services were equivalent to those of a full service veterinary dental provider. Severe periodontal disease developed and progressed and was never diagnosed. Failure to diagnose periodontal disease resulted in the loss of many teeth.*
- *Another complaint filed reported the death of their pet during non-anesthesia dental services. The owner believed that anesthesia was of high risk and that anesthesia free dental services were risk free. Unfortunately anesthesia free dental services can be very frightening and stressful for pets and even result in injury or death.*
- *Another complaint reported that their pet suffered a broken jaw during anesthesia free dental services.*

**For more information please visit the following webpages:**

<http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/dvm/Medicine/The-perils-of-anesthesia-free-dentistry/articleStandard/Article/detail/742257>

<http://veterinarydentistry.net/blog/2010/12/20/anesthesia-free-dentistry-dogs-pet/>

<http://www.cahreno.com/Blog/2011/08/30/anesthesia-free-dentistry/>

<http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/dvm/Dentistry/Anesthesia-safety-Face-your-clients-main-concern-a/ArticleStandard/Article/detail/274381>

<http://avdc.org/statements.html>

## American Veterinary Dental College Position Statement on Companion Animal Dental Scaling Without Anesthesia

In the United States and Canada, only licensed veterinarians can practice veterinary medicine. Veterinary medicine includes veterinary surgery, medicine and dentistry. Anyone providing dental services other than a licensed veterinarian, or a supervised and trained veterinary technician, is practicing veterinary medicine without a license and shall be subject to criminal charges.

This position statement addresses dental scaling procedures performed on pets without anesthesia, often by individuals untrained in veterinary dental techniques. Although the term "Anesthesia-Free Dentistry" has been used in this context, AVDC prefers to use the more accurate term **Non-Professional Dental Scaling (NPDS)** to describe this combination.

Owners of pets naturally are concerned when anesthesia is required for their pet. However, performing NPDS on an unanesthetized pet is inappropriate for the following reasons:

- Dental tartar is firmly adhered to the surface of the teeth. Scaling to remove tartar is accomplished using ultrasonic and sonic power scalers, plus hand instruments that must have a sharp working edge to be used effectively. Even slight head movement by the patient could result in injury to the oral tissues of the patient, and the operator may be bitten when the patient reacts.

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