

Dental Health

Do health concerns outweigh dental cleaning?

Jon Geller, DVM

Q. As a puppy, my dog had seizures. He was treated with medication and eventually was weaned off all medications. Often, he will start a licking action, like he has something in his mouth he is trying to move. Is this a residual seizure symptom? He is now 7 years old and has never been under anesthesia since neutering at 4 to 5 months of age, and I would like to have his teeth cleaned. What effect will anesthesia have on him with his history of seizures?

A. Its not uncommon for some dogs to have seizures as puppies, then grow out of them. Some dogs, such as yours, are started on an anticonvulsant medication, which can then be discontinued.

Your dogs licking behavior could be anything from a strange habit to a neurological reflex. Unless he shows any other abnormalities, like a change in his mental activity, it is most likely insignificant.

You shouldn't hesitate to schedule a dental cleaning for your dog, but be sure to ask your veterinarian about the anesthesia plan in light of your dogs history of seizures. Some medications used as sedatives in dogs can tend to trigger seizures in dogs that are prone to them. Fortunately, there are numerous alternatives that can be safely used.

The benefits of a good dental cleaning far outweigh the risks that anesthesia would present, especially with the plan to avoid medications that could help cause a seizure.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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