

## Gum Disease Linked to Heart Problems in Dogs

**Study shows pet owners that a dog's oral health can't be taken lightly.**

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A new study shows that there is a link between periodontal disease and cardiovascular-related conditions, such as endocarditis and cardiomyopathy, in dogs.

The study is of particular interest because gum disease occurs in up to 75 percent of all dogs by middle age, according to Larry Glickman, VMD, DrPH, a professor of epidemiology at Purdue University, who conducted the study.

"Previously published studies show evidence of a link between gum disease and heart disease in humans," he said. "We wanted to see if there was such a link in dogs."

The study, published in the February issue of the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association, was also conducted by Glickman's wife, Nita Glickman, Ph.D.; George Moore, DVM, Ph.D., Dipl. ACVPM, Dipl. ACVIM, at Purdue University's Small Animal Hospital; Gary Goldstein, DVM, Dipl. AVDC, at the University of Minnesota School of Veterinary Medicine; and Hugh Lewis, DVM, Dipl. ACVP, past president of DataSavant for Banfield, The Pet Hospital.

The researchers had a sample population of 59,296 dogs with a history of periodontal disease and an age-matched comparison group of an equal number of dogs with no history of periodontal disease.

The dogs were followed over time to see which ones developed heart diseases and the type of heart disease they developed. Tests were also conducted to determine if the incidence of heart disease would increase as the severity of the gum disease increased.

"The study demonstrates to pet owners, as well as veterinarians, that gum disease can't be taken lightly," Glickman said. "Gum disease causes more than just bad breath. The study may also stimulate an interest in pet food companies to develop foods that will prevent gum disease."

The research team is now increasing its research into identifying the specific bacteria in the mouth that causes these problems.

They also have an expanding interest in how gum disease affects the kidney and liver.