



# Taking the **Bite** out of Dental Fees

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*Being Canadian means we have access to universal health care. We don't have user fees, we don't have co-payments, we don't even have to worry about health insurance. One of the side effects of this great fortune is that few of us know the true cost of medical care.*

In contrast, dentistry is still a fee-for-service industry. While many of us have dental insurance, we are often aware of the true cost of dental procedures. Using information provided by Ontario dental and veterinary associations, dentistry provides an opportunity to compare fees in a human dental office and dental fees in a veterinary hospital.

Dental procedures performed in human dental offices are very similar to dental procedures performed by veterinarians. The major difference is that veterinarians have to anesthetize patients before undertaking a procedure. Unlike human dental patients, most veterinary patients bite. Use of anesthesia makes comparing the cost of dentistry in humans and the cost of dentistry in pets difficult.

## Another big difference between human and animal dentistry

Veterinary patients can't tell their doctors how they're feeling and what's wrong with them. Prior to administering anesthesia, veterinarians have to determine whether or not each patient is healthy enough to undergo the anesthesia. To get this information, veterinarians may require blood tests or other work-up prior to anesthesia. For additional safety, the veterinarian may recommend intravenous fluids during the procedure.

## So how does veterinary dentistry fare against human dentistry?

The scenario shown involves a patient that requires a dental examination, dental cleaning and the extraction of one tooth. For comparison's sake, the chart shows the fees that may be charged by a dentist and those charged by a veterinarian. Fees detailed below have been taken from the 2006 Ontario Dental Association Suggested Fee Guide and the 2006 Ontario Veterinary Medical Association's Suggested Fee Guide. To be fair, it is assumed that both the human dental patient and the veterinary dental patient need to be anesthetized.

Procedure	Dentist's Fee*	Veterinarian's Fee**
General Anesthesia (50 minutes) 30 minutes for cleaning 20 minutes for extraction	\$299.14	\$262.20
Dental Exam and Cleaning 3 units of scaling	\$201.39	\$81.70
Dental Surgery Extraction of 1 tooth	\$169.02	\$86.60
Fluoride Gel Application	\$23.10	\$6.30
Antibiotic Injection	\$22.11	\$21.50
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$692.65</b>	<b>\$436.80</b>

*The following procedures may also be carried out during a veterinary dentistry treatment.*

Pre-operative blood testing	na	\$69.84
Hospitalization (half day)	na	\$58.70
Intravenous fluids during surgery	na	\$64.10
Pain management during surgery	na	\$21.50
<b>TOTAL FEE</b>	<b>\$692.65</b>	<b>\$650.94</b>

\*\*Veterinary fees taken from the 2006 OVMA Suggested Fee Guide.

\* Dentist's Fees taken from the 2006 ODA Suggested Fee Guide.

N.B. The pricing listed above does not include post-procedural pain management medications which may be suggested for both human and animal patients.

As you can see, the fees for human dentistry are higher than those for veterinary dentistry in every category. The total fee for comparative procedures is \$692.65 for the human dentist and \$438.80 for the veterinarian. In addition to the comparable fees, veterinarian patients may require additional procedures during treatment. When you factor in pre-operative blood testing (to minimize the risk of anesthesia), hospitalization, intravenous fluids administered during anesthesia, and pain management (that is, medication administered to help make the patient comfortable) veterinary dentistry fees are still lower.