The modified Triadan numbering system for ease of dental charting
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A complete dental exam and charting should be part of every dental cleaning (or prophylaxis). This is often a much underappreciated and poorly performed aspect of this routine procedure. Ideally, this step is done thoroughly, but it also needs to be efficient as the patient is under general anesthesia.

There are 2 easy techniques that can help speed the process of charting.

The first technique is to perform “4-handed” charting. This means that a veterinarian (or a well-trained technician/assistant) performs the exam and calls out the findings to an additional technician/assistant for recording on the dental chart. This will cut down the time of the oral exam and help avoid missed pathology.

The other way to speed charting is to use the modified Triadan numbering system. This system uses numbers to identify the teeth. The technique is as follows:

Each quadrant is numbered starting with the maxillary right quadrant as the 100 series. This progresses clockwise so that the maxillary left is 200, mandibular left is 300, and the mandibular right is the 400 series.

Next, starting at the rostral midline (between the first incisors), the teeth are counted distally starting with the first incisor which is tooth 01. The canines are always number 04 and the first molars are 09. For example, the maxillary left fourth premolar is tooth 208. This has been extrapolated from the fact that the complete dentition of the ancestral carnivore has been determined by anatomists to consist of each quadrant containing 3 incisors, 1 canine tooth, 4 premolars and 3 molars.

There are several advantages of using this numbering system. First, it is much faster to say “108” than “right maxillary fourth premolar”. Second, it works very well in computerized records. And finally, the numbers are the same for cats as they are for dogs. IE the maxillary carnassial tooth (108 and 208) is the same number in cats as dogs regardless of the fact that cats are missing several teeth.

Below are images depicting the numbering system in dogs (Figure 1) and cats (Figure 2). If the clinic has interest in utilizing Veterinary Dental Specialties and Oral Surgery’s charts, please send an email to info@scvds.com and we will email you word documents that you can customize.
Figure 1: Modified Triadan Numbering system (canine)

Figure 1: Modified Triadan Numbering system (feline)