

PETS HAVE TEETH TOO!

Imagine how your teeth would look and feel if you didn't brush them daily. The same applies to your pet's teeth. Unless you are regularly providing some form of dental care, you are neglecting an important factor in the overall health of your pet.

Periodontal (gum) disease is one of the most common conditions seen by veterinarians today. The problem begins when plaque and tartar are allowed to build up on your pet's teeth. Plaque harbors bacteria which can infect gum tissue and the roots of teeth resulting in disease and tooth loss. Bacteria can enter the bloodstream through the diseased gum tissue and may contribute to heart, liver and kidney disease.

Signs and Symptoms of Poor Oral Health

- Persistent bad breath
- Sensitivity around the mouth
- Pawing at the mouth
- Loss of appetite
- Plaque (often not visible unless stained)
- Bleeding, inflamed or receded gums
- Tartar (Creamy-brown, hard material)
- Loose or missing teeth
- Difficulty eating and chewing food

Caring for Your Pet's Teeth

The first step in promoting oral health is to contact your veterinarian for a thorough oral examination. At this time, it may be necessary to have your pet's teeth cleaned above and below the gumline. This cleaning will require your pet to be put under anesthesia. Your pet may need to have his teeth cleaned once or twice a year to prevent tartar build-up and disease.

Home Care

Home dental care can help slow down the progression of dental disease and may decrease how often your pet needs to have his teeth cleaned professionally. The most effective option is to brush the teeth daily. We recommend using a toothbrush and a toothpaste specifically for animals. These toothbrushes are ultra-soft and shaped to fit your pet's mouth and teeth and the toothpaste is flavored to appeal to animals (poultry and malt flavoring). **Do not use human toothpaste or baking soda.** These products often contain ingredients which should not be swallowed.

Other products are special raw hide chews that contain enzymatic cleaners (CET chews). We recommend giving these twice a week. There is also a special diet that can help reduce plaque build-up. This is a prescription diet called T/D. The pieces of food are much larger than normal and mechanically help to clean the teeth when your pet is eating.

It is important to remember that each pet is unique. Some may develop plaque build-up at a very early age and may need multiple dental cleanings and others may build-up tartar much more slowly. Some pets will accept having their teeth brushed and some may be almost impossible. If you have a hard to handle pet, it may be better to try the CET chews or the special diet.