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HELP KEEP YOUR PET HEALTHY – PAY ATTENTION TO THOSE PEARLY WHITES

Dental hygiene is just as important to your dog and cat's overall health as nutrition, exercise, and grooming. Unfortunately, dental hygiene for our pets is sometimes overlooked. Many pet owners have accepted "doggy breath" as a natural occurrence and few owners brush their pet's teeth often enough if at all.

- Daily brushing is recommended to remove plaque (a slime on the tooth surface). Undisturbed plaque can start to form tartar/calculus within 24-48 hours.
- Work your pet's brushing into your routine - consider brushing your pet's teeth around the same time you do yours, early morning or before bedtime.
- Before you begin, ask your veterinarian to show you some techniques to make tooth brushing easier on you and your pet.

Dental Care

We recommend that you look at your pet's teeth on a regular basis and be aware of the signs that may indicate a problem. Use caution and lift the lips around the mouth and look at all of the teeth and gums in the mouth. Watch for the following signs: halitosis (bad breath), reluctance to chew, increased salivation, red gums, tartar (yellow or brown, hard substance on the surface of the tooth), or missing teeth. Give us a call if notice any problems or have questions about what you are seeing. Address dental disease as soon as it is detected but better yet, work hard to prevent it.

HOME CARE

There are several things you can do at home to keep your pet's teeth healthy. Start a dental care routine early in life to allow your pet to get used to the feeling of having his teeth brushed. Here are some important tips:

- Do not use human toothpaste – it can make your pet sick. Use a product designed specially for dogs or cats.

Your veterinarian will evaluate your pet's teeth at every annual exam. Based on the exam, a professional dental cleaning may be recommended. This requires general anesthesia. Your pet's teeth and gums will be examined thoroughly (including full mouth x-rays.) The teeth will be scaled and polished. If any problems are noted, tooth extractions may be necessary. Alternatively, you may be referred to a veterinary dentist for specialty procedures such as a root canal to alleviate pain and to preserve the tooth structure.

Some pets require professional dental cleanings one or more times a year, while others can go longer in between cleanings. By following a consistent program of home-care, you will greatly improve your pet's dental health. This will result in fewer professional cleanings, less tooth loss, and a happier, healthier pet.



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