



Are Your Pets Teeth Healthy?

A Pet Owners Guide to Dental Care

Are your pet's teeth healthy? Your pet's teeth and oral cavity are prone to disease just as your own teeth are. Diseases such as gingivitis, tooth decay and periodontal disease can affect your pet's oral health. Bad breath, excessive salivation, loss of teeth, bleeding gums, poor appetite and pain while eating are all signs of gum disease. You should not wait for these signs before starting a program of preventative dental care. Many of these diseases can be prevented or controlled if proper oral health care is started at a young age and continued throughout the life of your pet.

Plaque-forming bacteria colonize on the teeth and lead to tartar and calculus buildup causing periodontal disease. Buildup of large numbers of bacteria on the teeth have been linked to infections of the upper respiratory tract, tonsillitis, pneumonia and even heart disease. A combination of home dental care and veterinary dental care is needed to maintain your pets oral health.

Home Dental Care - This consist of a proper diet and routine cleaning of your pet's teeth. Dry foods are the diet of choice for most pets. The encouragement of certain chewing exercises are important. Dry biscuits, rawhide bones and nylabones can be used for dogs to encourage chewing which reduces tartar and calculus formation. Routine cleaning of your pet's teeth should include daily, or at the least, weekly, brushing to remove plaque. Most animals can be trained to accept toothbrushing. You should select a quiet place and be gentle and patient. It may take time to get your pet used to the idea, but the benefits are numerous. We recommend that you use a soft-bristled toothbrush. For animals that won't accept a toothbrush try wrapping a small piece of gauze around your finger. Because human toothpaste can upset an animal's stomach we recommend that you use a toothpaste made especially for your pet. Apply a small amount of toothpaste to the toothbrush, or gauze, and gently brush the outer surfaces of the teeth. You can do this without even opening your pet's mouth. The inside surfaces of the teeth are usually cleaned fairly well by the tongue, however, some animals will need the inside surfaces brushed as well as the outer surfaces. A new dog food called prescription diet t/d has been developed by Hills Pet Foods. The canine t/d diet is designed to reduce tartar and calculus formation on dog's teeth. It is a welcome addition to your home dental care program.

Professional Dental Care - Regular veterinary dental exams are an important part of monitoring your home dental care program. Upon oral examination we may recommend that your pet's teeth be professionally cleaned. This may include an anesthetic, scaling and polishing of teeth, and possibly restorative dentistry. It may be necessary to schedule professional dental cleaning every six months depending on your pet's oral health.

Your pet's teeth are important to its health and well being. Proper dental care will help your pet have healthy teeth and gums throughout its entire life. Please feel free to ask us about dental care for your pet.

