



Dental Handout – Caring for Your Pet's Teeth

Regular brushing and annual dental cleaning are just as important for dogs and cats as they are for humans. **Too often, we overlook the need for dental care in our pets.** Untreated teeth can cause serious problems in the overall health of your pet.

Oral disease is the most frequently diagnosed health problem for pets. Cats often develop cavities below the gum line, which may be hard to detect but can be very painful. As in humans, abscessed teeth or periodontal disease can affect other parts of the body. In dogs and cats it can cause disease in multiple organs including the heart, kidney and lungs.

A regular veterinary dental check-up and cleaning under a short lasting anaesthetic is important to your pet's good health. Equally important is home dental care, such as brushing your pet's teeth at least 3 times a week. Lack of daily plaque removal at home is the single most important reason our pets are so commonly affected by dental disease.

Although caring for your pet's teeth at home may at first seem a difficult (if not impossible) job, the recent development of many innovative home-care dental products has simplified this task tremendously.

Brushing

Toothbrush/finger brush. These specially designed brushes for dogs and cats, the “gold standard” for plaque removal, can be used with special animal toothpaste (a non-foaming, enzymatic, antibacterial paste in tasty chicken, malt, vanilla, beef or seafood flavours). Only the outside surfaces of the teeth need brushing, which takes about 30 seconds per side. (do not be tempted to use human toothpaste as it will irritate your pet's stomach).

The following technique can be used to ease both younger & older animals into brushing:

To introduce your pet to brushing: wrap gauze or a wash cloth around your finger & use it like a toothbrush on your pet's teeth. Wipe all the teeth, front & back, with strokes from the gum line to

the tip of the tooth. Do this for 1-2 weeks until your pet is familiar with having his or her gums rubbed.

Gradually work up to a soft toothbrush & plain water.

After a week of using a soft brush, add a small amount of dog & cat toothpaste.

Brush the front teeth first & then the large upper & lower teeth in the back.

Make sure you get the brush all the way back to the last teeth, because they accumulate tartar & calculus rapidly. You may have to lift the lip a little to recheck these teeth. *It is not necessary to brush the inside surface of the teeth in most pets.* Hold the mouth closed & focus on the outside surface. The brush should be moved in an oval direction & rub in the crevice where the gum meets the teeth, because this is where odour & infection begin.

Some pets do very well with electric toothbrushes.

Water Additives

Products such as Aquadent & Healthy Mouth can be very helpful. They are added to your pet's drinking water & can help minimise calculus formation. They also help freshen the breath.

Dental Foods

Diets such as **Hills T/D** & **Royal Canin Dental Diet** are prescription diets designed to help clean the teeth. They can be used when brushing is impractical & are nutritionally balanced dry formulas with a woven texture that scrapes pets teeth clean as they chew. They are well-liked by most pets & relatively low calorie. Hills T/D also helps prevent gingivitis in dogs & cats.

Dental Treats & chews

Some dental chews are impregnated with antibacterial enzymes and help prevent tartar & calculus. The act of chewing also helps so things such as Kong chews are very useful.

We encourage you to regularly examine your pet's teeth for signs of periodontal disease, including swollen red or bleeding gums; persistent bad breath; loose teeth or the loss of teeth; pus between the gums & teeth; Broken teeth & any unusual growth in the mouth. Reluctance to play with chew toys, eat or drink cold water are warning signs of periodontal or gum disease.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CALL US ON 03 5786965 TO ARRANGE FOR A DENTAL CHECK FOR YOUR PET.