

Home Dental Care for Your Pet

You do it every day, usually twice daily and sometimes more. You have been doing it since you started walking. You probably don't think much about it, but if you skipped this step in your daily routine, others would certainly notice and your overall health may be affected. What are we talking about? Brushing your teeth! In honor of February's National Pet Dental Health Month, there are several things you can do to make sure your pet's teeth stay healthy just like yours.

1. Take your pet to your veterinarian for a thorough dental examination. This exam can identify potential problems, such as plaque and tartar buildup, infected teeth, or oral tumors. It can also determine if a dental cleaning or periodontal treatment is needed.
2. Schedule a dental cleaning with your veterinarian if recommended.
3. Begin a dental care regimen at home.

What's involved in taking care of your pet's teeth at home? Regardless of the size or temperament of your cat or dog, there are several things you can do to keep those teeth pearly white. The gold standard for at home care is tooth brushing. Equip yourself with a pet-specific toothbrush that is designed especially for pets, with a

very small head and soft bristles or one that fits over your finger. Never use fluoride containing dental products on your pets, as they may be toxic. The goal is for your pet to enjoy this process so use a flavored animal toothpaste that he enjoys (poultry flavor is always a favorite). Get your pet accustomed to the idea by massaging their lips with your fingers and letting your pet lick the toothpaste from your finger. Once comfortable with this, progress to rubbing the teeth and gums with the toothpaste on your fingers. Next, introduce the toothbrush. Let your pet lick the toothpaste off the brush and gently chew on it. Finally, place the brush with toothpaste at a 45 degree angle to the teeth and clean in small, circular motions. Lift the lip so you have access to all of the teeth. The side of the tooth that touches the cheek accumulates the most tarter, so focus there. Ideally, brush teeth in this manner every day. I recommend brushing after dinner, as many pets enjoy the taste and attention, and see it as "dessert". It could take several weeks to get your pet accustomed to brushing so be patient and don't give up.

If your pet refuses to have their teeth brushed, there are other alternatives. The next best home care method is oral rinse with a chlorhexadine based product. Another option includes using a water additive such as CET Aquadent combined with a treat like

By Dr. Elizabeth Ellis
February 2013
Copyright 2013



Dr. Elizabeth Ellis can be found most days at Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital in Lakeside, AZ. She is a passionate lover of animals, outdoor enthusiast, and connoisseur of great movies, popcorn and generous portions of Milk Duds.

CETHextra Chews, which will decrease the daily plaque accumulation. Keep in mind that you can also switch your dog or cat's treats to Hill's Science Diet T/D treats, which will complement any home dental care method you choose.

Regardless of the method you choose, the key is sticking with it. Be sure to take your pet to your veterinarian if you notice red gums, tumors, cracked teeth, or bad breath. These can all be signs of

significant dental disease that necessitate veterinary treatment. Remember there are no dentures for cats and dogs so take care of their teeth as you would your own.

(Most Februarys during National Dental Health Month, Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital offers FREE dental oral examinations with an animal dentistry trained and nationally certified veterinary technician. Call Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital to see what specials are running).

By Dr. Elizabeth Ellis
February 2013
Copyright 2013

ASPEEN
RIDGE
Animal Hospital



Pet owners can feel reassured about the care their pets receive at an AAHA-accredited hospital, such as Aspen Ridge Animal Hospital. Not only do we meet AAHA standards, but we go above and beyond by providing 24 hour emergency services, monthly continuing education to our entire staff, long appointment slots to spend additional time with owners and their pets, and complete multi-modal pain control for our patients. We are dedicated to offering the best care to our patients and clients, staying on the leading edge of veterinary medicine, and providing the range of services you and your pet deserve.

