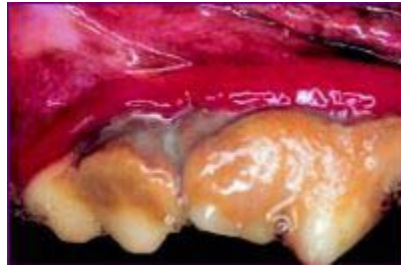


Dental Care for Your Pet

Why Should You Brush Your Pet's Teeth?

Daily removal of plaque is the key to an oral hygiene program. Unless your pet's teeth are brushed daily, plaque, which is an accumulation of bacteria, will build up at the gum lines. Eventually calculus will form further irritating the gums. Infection progresses to loosen and destroy the attachment of the tooth. **In addition to loose teeth, infection under the gum line can spread to the liver, kidneys, and heart.**



Getting Started

Step 1: Choose the toothbrush. Getting a pet or pediatric toothbrush is best. They are softer than even children's toothbrushes and more angled. You can also use finger toothbrushes that fit over the tip of your finger.

Step 2: The earlier the better. If you can begin brushing your pet's teeth as a puppy or kitten, regular brushing will be a breeze. If your pet is already an adult, wean them into routine teeth brushing.

Step 3: Choose pet toothpaste. The best pet toothpastes contain enzymes that help control plaque. Use toothpaste that is fluoride-free (pets tend to swallow the paste and it can become toxic over time). Try to avoid toothpastes with baking soda, detergents, or salt sometimes found in human pastes. Rather than placing the paste on top of the brush, try to incorporate it between the bristles ("smear it in to brush"). This allows the paste to spend the most time next to the teeth.

Step 4: Choose the time. Daily brushing is best, but at least try to manage twice weekly brushings. Pick a time when you will not be rushed and the pet is not expecting something else (regular play or walk time). Start slowly not expecting the finish the entire mouth the first time. You may have to slowly work toward being able to brush an entire mouth at one time. Begin brushing without paste at first to get the pet use to the object in its mouth.



Step 5: Only brush the outer surface of the teeth. Saliva will naturally clean the inside surfaces. The toothbrush bristles should be placed at the gum margin where the teeth and gums meet at a 45 degree angle. The movement should be in an oval pattern. Be sure to gently force the bristle ends into the area around the base of the tooth as well as into the space between the teeth. Ten short back and forth motions should be completed, then the brush moved to a new location. Cover three to four teeth at a time. Most attention should be given to the outside of the upper teeth.

What Kind of Home Care is Available?

The toothbrush kit
Dental treats
T/D diet by Hill's Science Diet
Oravet
Maxiguard Oral Gel
Dental toys



My Pet Needs A Dental Cleaning, What Should I Expect?

Anesthesia is necessary when performing teeth cleanings. Anesthesia provides three important functions: immobilization in order to clean below the gum line, pain control, and the ability to place a tube into the windpipe, so bacterial products do not enter the respiratory system.

We take every effort to ensure safe anesthesia. We use the safest of anesthetic agents, and dogs and cats are given pre-operative tests depending on their age and condition to qualify them for anesthesia. Finally all animals are monitored while anesthetized with electrocardiograms and pulse oximeters.

Signs of Oral/Dental Disease in Pets

1. Bad breath (halitosis)
2. Broken tooth/teeth
3. Excessive drooling
4. Reluctance to eat, especially dry food, or to play with chew toys
5. Chewing with or favoring one side of the mouth
6. Pawing at or rubbing the muzzle/mouth
7. Bleeding from the mouth
8. Loss of symmetry of the muzzle and/or lower jaw
9. Swollen/drainage tracts under (or in front of) the eye
10. Sudden change in behavior (aggressive or withdrawn)
11. Chronic eye infections or drainage with no exact cause or cure
12. Inability to open or close the mouth
13. Chronic sneezing
14. Discolored tooth/teeth
15. Abnormal discharge from nose
16. A mass/growth in the mouth



Severe periodontal disease with pus.



Periodontal abscess (pus-pocket).



Cat with tooth root infection.

Natural Veterinary Dental Care

As with all medical recommendations they should be checked with your veterinarian before giving them to your pet.

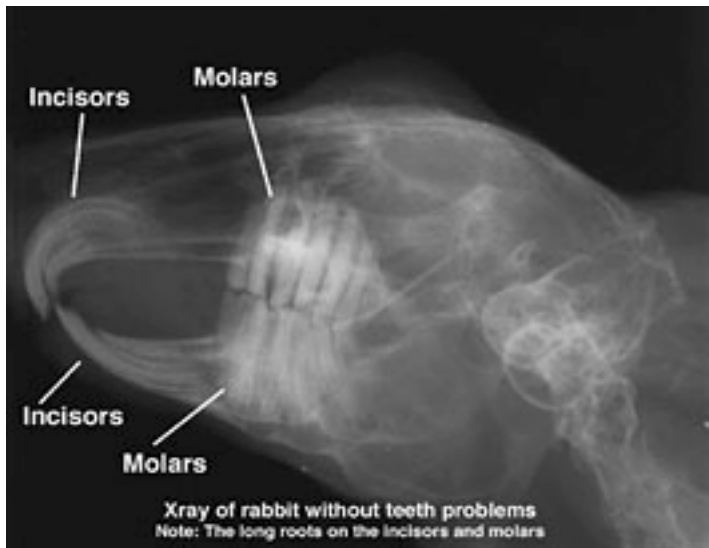
- Vitamin C – used to decrease swelling, aid in the care of periodontal disease, and decrease pain.
- Myrrh – soothes inflamed gum tissues. Can be applied with a q-tip when mixed with distilled water.
- Echinacea – helpful in periodontal therapy.
- Arnica – can be given before and after oral surgery (homeopathic remedy).
- Calendula lotion – can be used to soothe ulcers in the mouth and promote healing.
- Fragaria – may be helpful in preventing the build-up of tartar given every other month.
- Chamomilla – can be used to decrease puppy and kitten teething as well as chewing on furniture.
- Hypericum – decrease oral pain.
- Ginkgo – improves gum health

Exotic Animal Dental Disease



Rabbit with overgrown incisors.

Rabbits – the most common disease of pet rabbits is dental disease. Rabbit teeth continue to grow throughout their lifetime. If rabbits are not receiving proper veterinary care and/or diet they will suffer from dental disease. Signs of disease are similar to those for cats and dogs and include: loss of appetite, being more selective about the food, dropping food out of the mouth, excessive tear production, nasal discharge, salivating excessively, tooth grinding, bulging of the eye, and others. Occasionally, there are no signs.



Radiograph of the skull of a rabbit demonstrating placement of the incisors and molars.



Ferrets – are often missed because owners aren't aware that they need dental care too. Ferrets can require yearly dental cleanings. It is important to try to brush your ferret's teeth in the same manner as stated above for dogs and cats. Keeping up with regular veterinary examinations will aid owners in making decisions as to when dental cleanings are necessary.

Websites of Interest

www.veterinarypartner.com

www.avdc.org

www.avdonline.org

www.petdental.com

www.cetdental.com

www.oravet.com

www.vohc.org

Some information borrowed from Veterinary Information Network & Jan Bellows, DVM, DAVDC. Dr. Bellows is a board-certified veterinary dentist.