

Guidelines for Dental Home Care



1. Start **as soon as possible** in your pet's life. Eight to twelve weeks is great. By brushing once or twice weekly you help get them used to the idea so that they are familiar with the process by the time their permanent teeth erupt. By the time they are adult you need to be brushing at least four times weekly to have an effect. You may want to stop while they are losing their baby teeth because their mouth may be a little tender.

2. **Make it fun!** Use lots of love and praise and treats. Keep sessions short at first and, if possible, at the same time of day to set up a routine. If your pet is food motivated you can brush before a meal so that the meal is the reward.

-start by handling the muzzle and lips, then rubbing teeth and gums. You can put a bit of beef broth for dogs or tuna juice for cats in their mouth as a treat.

-next, use a gauze, washcloth or piece of pantyhose flavoured and wrapped around your finger to gently rub the teeth.

-finally, try a soft toothbrush or proxy brush with your broth or juice. Hold the brush at a 45 degree angle to the tooth and brush back and forth from gum to tip. Brushing the tongue side is less critical.

-you can add a veterinary dental toothpaste or gel (human pastes cause stomach upset), but remember, it's the mechanical action of brushing that removes most of the plaque, which is the culprit in dental disease. You will **NOT** be successful in removing the mineralized plaque, called tartar or calculus, from the teeth by brushing. Your veterinarian has the tools to do this part!

3. It helps to **use abrasive foods and toys** such as dental kibble, pressed rawhide, dense rubber chew toys or dental chews to reduce plaque accumulation. **Avoid** natural bones, dried cow hooves and hard nylon toys, as these are hard enough to break teeth.

4. By following a consistent home-care program you will greatly improve your pet's dental health, and their doggy breath! It can also be a pleasant bonding experience for you both. Ultimately, it will mean fewer professional cleanings and a happier, more pain-free pet. But remember, there is **no substitute for the professional** assessments and cleaning at your veterinarian, the same as your trips to the dentist.