

Bad Breath Isn't Funny Anymore

Marco caught the guest by surprise in the living room. He planted a big, breathy smooch on her face. "Ugh! Dog breath!" The room erupted in laughter. It wasn't so funny the next day when Marco had his veterinary check-up. The 2-year-old dog was diagnosed with gum disease, and he was in danger of losing a tooth if he didn't begin a regular dental care program. According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, Marco's case is not unique. Studies show that more than 80 percent of dogs by age two and 70 percent of cats by age three show some signs of periodontal disease. Bad breath could be an early warning sign.

During National Pet Dental Health Month each February, pet owners are reminded that dogs and cats need good oral care. Particularly at risk of having dental problems are small dog breeds. Experts say these breeds are more likely to develop problems because their teeth are crowded into small mouths. This can create a haven for plaque buildup. Cervical line lesions are the most common dental disease of domestic cats. Studies show that about 28 percent of domestic cats that veterinarians examine have them. Because the lesions often begin beneath the gum line, owners usually are unaware that there is a problem until the tooth is seriously damaged.



Prevention

Prevention is the key to helping pets maintain good oral health. The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends that pet owners follow three important steps:

1. Visit Your Veterinarian

Just as dental visits are the cornerstone of a human dental program, visiting the veterinarian is the key to ensuring the health of your pet's teeth. A veterinarian will conduct a thorough physical examination of your pet as part of the dental evaluation.

2. Start a Dental Care Routine at Home

Brushing, chews, and special foods can all benefit your pet's dental health. Home care can help prevent many serious dental problems, and your investments can save the stress, pain, and cost of dental problems later.

3. Get Regular Veterinary Dental Checkups

The veterinarian needs to monitor the progress of your pet's preventive dental care routine much the same way a dentist monitors your teeth. Regular dental check-ups are essential.

Once a pet's teeth display the warning signs - bad breath, a yellow-brown crust of tartar around the gum line, pain or bleeding when the pet eats or when you touch its gums - gum disease may already be present. For a professional dental check-up, call the clinic today!



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PET NEWS

Pets Have Teeth Too!!!

Why you should care for your pet's teeth!

What if you never brushed your teeth? Your mouth would be sore and you would probably have trouble eating. Infections from your mouth would spread throughout your body, making you feel tired and sick all the time. The same thing happens in your pet's mouth. Most dental problems in animals occur because of neglect. But with regular dental care, at home and at your veterinarian's office, you can prevent serious dental problems for your pet before they begin. Caring for your pet's teeth and gums also means taking care of his or her overall health.



The best defense against plaque buildup on your pet's teeth is regular home care in combination with professional scaling and polishing. Plaque is a clear, thick substance consisting of bacteria, saliva, and food particles, and keeping it off the pet's teeth is a necessity for healthy teeth and gums. When left

on the teeth, it soon hardens to a very hard yellow or brown tarter. Infections from this plaque and tarter will eventually spread throughout the body and affect the pet's immune system. When the immune system cannot clear the bacteria and toxins out of the mouth, periodontal disease is the result. This is a disease that affects the gums and bones in the mouth, causing tooth loss and other serious problems. A pet with periodontal disease is circulating bacteria and toxins throughout its body, which can result in liver, kidney, and heart disease. Studies show that 80 percent of pets over age two have some form of periodontal disease.



Oral disease is the most common health problem treated in small animal clinics today. Remember, with good dental care, your pet will live a happier, healthier, longer life. In fact, dental care can add 2 to 4 years to your pet's life!! Doesn't your best friend deserve a healthy smile?

Taking Care of Your Pet's Teeth at Home

Prevention of dental problems begins at home. Caring for your pet's teeth at home also reduces the frequency of professional care, and there are a variety of dental products available for pet owners to use. Brushing your pet's teeth is very effective since it removes food particles and kills bacteria that can lead to plaque buildup. Daily brushing is best, but several times a week is also very beneficial. Introduce a toothbrush gradually and be sure to praise and reassure your pet throughout the process. Use tasty toothpaste designed for pets to help avoid resistance. Do not use human toothpaste because it can cause stomach upset when swallowed.

Most people (less than 3 percent) do not brush their pet's teeth, usually because it can be difficult or too time consuming. There are some products available that can be an alternative or addition to brushing. Dental chews, such as CET chew or Greenies, are both available at Flanary Veterinary Clinic and can help reduce the plaque and tarter formation on teeth. An at-home sealant called OraVet is also available to help protect your pet's teeth against plaque and bacteria. After a professional cleaning at the veterinarian's office, a "base sealant" is applied to the pet's teeth. Then, an at-home barrier is easily applied by the pet owner to maintain the "base sealant." It takes less than 60 seconds to apply and is only done once a week. The OraVet Barrier Sealant creates an invisible barrier that prevents plaque and bacteria from attaching to the teeth.



The type of food your pet eats is also very important to your pet's dental health. Soft pet foods, and most people food, can become trapped between your pet's teeth, where your pet has trouble removing it. The food sits on the teeth and can cause tarter buildup and decay. Feeding hard food causes an abrasive action on the teeth as the pet chews, helping to keep the teeth and gum line clean. Science Diet makes a food called t/d, that is specially constructed to further help remove tarter already formed on the teeth. Science Diet t/d can be purchased at Flanary Veterinary Clinic.

Some type of home care is a must in order to control periodontal disease. There are many options available, so it can be easy to choose a method that works best for you and your pet. There is even one to add to your pet's drinking water! For more information on some of the mentioned products, or others, visit flanaryvet.com or visit the clinic.

Professional Dental Care

As part of your pet's bi-yearly veterinary checkup, your dog or cat will receive a dental examination. By looking at the teeth, a veterinarian or technician can determine if professional cleaning or treatment is necessary. Many dental problems are apparent at this time, while others may be evaluated during a professional cleaning. Gum problems occur when bacteria accumulate at the gum line and, in time, will appear as a yellow or brown accumulation of tartar on the teeth. Soon the gum will become red or swollen and a disagreeable odor will be present in your pet's breath. If left untreated, this will progress to eventual tooth loss. Another common dental abnormality is chips or fractures on the tooth's surface. Chewing on items harder than your pet's teeth, such as rocks or bones, may break teeth. Superficial chips usually cause no problems; however, tooth fractures that expose the pulp or root canal allow bacteria to travel up the tooth, eventually leading to a tooth abscess.

To effectively clean and polish your pet's teeth, a safe anesthetic gas will be used, one that is gentle enough to allow a quick recovery so that your dog or cat can return home the same day of the procedure. Light anesthesia allows a pain-free and stress-free cleaning, polishing, and evaluation of each tooth, as well as whole mouth examination. A veterinarian or skilled veterinary technician uses an ultrasonic scaler to remove all the tarter from each tooth, above and below the gum line. Then, each tooth is polished smooth, making them more resistant to future tarter accumulation. In severe periodontal cases, one or more teeth may need to be extracted. Most of the time these teeth are already extremely loose and causing your pet pain. Once cleaned and examined, the teeth can be dried, then a sealant can be applied. If your pet's gums are irritated by the tarter accumulation, the veterinarian may prescribe an antibiotic that is specific for the bacteria that is found in the mouth. Your pet quickly recovers and soon goes home with clean teeth and fresh breath.

The frequency of dental prophylaxis varies between each pet and depends on the stage of the disease and the ability of the owner to offer preventative home care. Most pets should get at least one cleaning a year, and many need them twice a year, just like we humans. In some cases, some may need a cleaning every 3 months.



Periodontal Disease Vaccine

There is now an exciting new step in fighting periodontal disease. A Porphyromonas vaccine is available to help prevent and slow the progression of periodontal disease in dogs. This vaccine does not reduce the tarter accumulation on the teeth, but it fights the bacteria that cause long-term effects such as tooth loss and oral bone loss.

Your dog will initially receive two doses of the vaccine, given three weeks apart, then it is boosted once a year. The vaccine is great to be started on puppies, but a dog with any stage of periodontal disease can benefit from its effect.

The Porphyromonas vaccine should be used as a part of a total dental care plan that includes at-home care and professional cleanings. Remember that the mouth is the door to the rest of the body, so keeping it healthy also keeps your pet healthy!

SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Be sure to tell the veterinarian if your pet shows any of these signs:

1. Bad breath (one of the first signs of periodontal disease)
2. Red or swollen gums
3. A yellow-brown crust near the gum line
4. Loose or missing teeth
5. Discomfort when mouth or gums are touched
6. Possible decreased appetite or weight loss due to difficulty chewing

Top 10 Dog Breeds That Are at a Higher Risk of Having Dental Disease:

1. Poodle
2. Yorkie
3. Maltese
4. Pomeranian
5. Sheltie
6. Cavalier
7. Papillon
8. Dachshund
9. Standard Poodle
10. Havanese

