

Home Dental Care

Can you imagine what your teeth would look like if you didn't brush them? Home dental care for our pets is the most important dental care. The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends a full dental cleaning every six months just like your dentist recommends, but when it comes to our pets dental cleanings are not needed quite that often if proper dental care is provided at home.

Just like with our teeth nothing is as good as brushing. There are many different toothbrushes available for pets. Many of these have an interesting shape to better conform to cat and dogs mouths. Fingerbrushes are also available for pets who are more accepting of an owners finger in their mouth. Human toothbrushes can be used although they do not tend to do as well on the inside of the teeth. It is important to know that most of the dental problems we see in pets stem from the outside of the teeth. These toothbrushes reach between teeth and down under gums to remove tiny deposits of food. They act as tiny gentle scrub brushes to give the closest possible cleaning.

Now we come to toothpaste. **Do not use human toothpaste on your pets.** This is due to the sudsing agents in our toothpaste that should not be swallowed. These agents can upset pets stomach since they don't quite understand that you should rinse and then spit. Toothpaste for pets comes in a variety of flavors from vanilla mint to poultry and malt. Vanilla mint is often more tolerated by owners while the poultry and malt flavors tend to be preferred by pets.

For those pets who will not allow their teeth to be brushed there are other options available. The first option is dental sprays which are sprayed into the mouth as an anti-plaque wash. These sprays can also be sprayed onto a tissue or cloth and rubbed on the teeth in addition to brushing. Dental treats are also available for pets (especially cats) who will not allow anything near their mouths. Although this method does is not as thorough as brushing it does go a long way in helping prevent future dental problems. These treats are often a freeze dried protein such as fish that is treated with enzymatic dentrifice to help remove plaque. Often these kind of treats are also a little harder or larger than usual to encourage chewing. There are also compressed raw hide products that can get results close to that of brushing when used properly although it is important to note that the rawhide should be compressed so that they can not unroll and cause obstruction in the GI tract. Along the same lines as the treats mentioned above there is also T/D this is a food made by the Hills company to help with dental cleanliness. This product can be fed as a food however we have seen really good results from giving a few kibbles as treats on a daily basis.

Good dental care starts young the younger a pet is when the dental care is started the more tolerant of it they will be. Start brushing puppy and kitten teeth as soon as possible to get them used to having these things in their mouths. Daily dental care is ideal in a perfect world but even brushing a couple times a week can make a huge difference in your pets life. Dental hygiene is not just a cosmetic issue but can effect your pets overall health and well being.