



By Dr. Maria Krenz, DVM – The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic 763-856-4848

Pro-Active Pet Dental Care Makes Happy Pets

February is National Pet Dental Month

Have you ever had a cavity? Now imagine that same pain without the ability to tell anyone about it. This time of year is perfect to be pro-active about your pet's dental care. According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats show signs of oral disease by age 3. The first step in creating a dental plan for your pet is having a dental exam by your veterinarian.

Dental Cleaning

Does stinky pet breath have you spending less time with your best friend? Many pets benefit from a professional dental cleaning from your veterinarian. It is best to have their teeth cleaned before the buildup and damage caused by plaque and gingivitis gets too severe. Contact your veterinarian for more information on this procedure.

Tooth Brushing

What if you couldn't brush your teeth? It is best to introduce tooth brushing very slowly. Start with using your finger, a finger tooth brush or soft bristle toothbrush. Lift your pet's lip and rub over a few teeth. Pet toothpaste or even a flavored snack (canned food, tuna juice) can add flavor and make the experience more enjoyable. Keep the sessions short and give a lot of praise and rewards afterwards. Gradually work up to brushing more teeth at a time. Do not use human toothpaste as they contain ingredients that may be toxic to pets if ingested. Pets would benefit from daily brushing but even twice per week will slow down plaque and tartar buildup.

Mouth Rinses

What if I can't brush my pet's teeth? For pets that do not tolerate brushing, an oral mouth rinse is the next best product. Rinses are usually squirted into both side of the mouth and are designed to be done daily. Some formulas are designed to be added directly to the drinking water.

Chews

It's like a treat, but provides a dental cleaning, too. Many chews are available on the market. Any time a chew is introduced be sure that the pet does not bite pieces off and swallow them whole as this can be a potential choking hazard. Not every chew is designed to clean the teeth. Make sure you read the label and look for claims to reduce plaque and tartar.

Dental Diet

Eat and clean made easy with dental diets. The kibble size of most hard food is too small to help with cleaning the teeth. There are specific dental diets available. Many will be a prescription diet and available through your veterinarian. These foods usually consist of a large kibble size that requires more chewing.

Always talk to your veterinarian about any dental products before beginning to use them on your pet. For more information visit www.petdental.com, www.vohc.com, www.healthypet.com/library_view.aspx?ID=142, www.virbacvet.com/cet/

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.