



## **Guidelines for Dental Homecare**

1. When to start? As soon as possible. Eight to twelve weeks of age is best. Pets do not need maintenance this young, but by brushing once or twice weekly they will be familiar with the routine when the permanent teeth erupt. It is a good idea to stop brushing while your pet is losing its baby teeth as the mouth will be a bit sore and your poking around with the brush will cause more pain. Once all the permanent teeth are in you can pick up where you left off.
2. The first step is to work with your pet's mouth. With a little patience your pet will soon accept your attention. Make it fun for both of you. Use a lot of love and especially praise to gain confidence. Try to have your practice sessions at the same time each day so your pet gets into a routine. Late in the evening works well, as everyone involved is generally in a quiet mood then. If your pet is highly motivated by food, try just before dinner with the meal acting as a reward for co-operating.
3. Start by handling the muzzle and tickling the lips and soon you will be able to rub the teeth and gums with your fingers.
4. Next, use a washcloth or piece of pantyhose, wrapped around the end of your finger and flavored as above, to gently rub the teeth.
5. Finally, use a soft toothbrush to brush the teeth. There are several veterinary brushes available and many human brushes are well suited to animal use as well. Hold the brush at a 45 degree angle to the tooth and brush back and forth or from gum to tip. Brushing the tongue side of the teeth is less critical. Use garlic water or tuna juice.
6. There is an every growing selection of veterinary tooth washes, pastes, and gels. Your veterinarian can help you select the one suited to your situation. These products all increase the effectiveness of your home-care program but remember, it's the brushing which does most of the cleaning. Brushing at least twice weekly is recommended (daily is better). Human tooth paste is to be avoided as it will cause stomach upset if swallowed. Baking soda, with its very high sodium content can be dangerous to older patients. Hydrogen peroxide can be too harsh for the gums and must not be swallowed.
7. It helps to give abrasive foods and toys such as dry kibble, chew toys, etc. Do not feed bones or dried cow hooves.
8. By following a consistent program of home-care, you will greatly improve your pet's dental health. This will mean fewer professional cleanings, less tooth loss, and a happier, healthier pet. However, please remember that there is no substitute for professional veterinary care. We must work as a team to ensure a long and happy life for your pet.

**Thank you for letting us maintain your pet's dental health**