



## **Brushing Your Pet's Teeth**

### **Importance of Oral Care**

According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats show signs of oral disease by age three. This can lead to even more serious health problems including heart, lung and kidney disease. Ensuring your pet receives proper dental care from an early age is critical.

In addition to oral examinations and dental cleanings performed by the veterinarians and staff at Vermont Integrative Veterinary Associates, there are several things you can do to ensure the mouth of your dog or cat stays healthy.

### **Brushing at Home – It's Simpler than it sounds!**

Brushing your pet's teeth daily helps prevent a multitude of oral and other health problems. It is best to introduce dental home care early with your new puppy or kitten. During your first veterinary visit with us, request a demonstration of how to properly and effectively brush your pet's teeth.

Below are step-by-step instructions on how to brush your pet's teeth:

- 1) Start with a healthy, comfortable mouth by having AVS perform a dental cleaning. Existing problems can cause pain leading to an uncooperative dog or cat.
- 2) Start slowly by letting your pet become comfortable with you working inside their mouth with your finger. Gently rub along the gum line. Start at the front and move to toward the back upper and then lower teeth and gums.
- 3) Pull out the lip gently and rub the outside of the teeth and gums.
- 4) Pull your pet's head back gently to encourage him to open their mouth slightly so that teeth can be accessed more easily. If there is a struggle to open the mouth, do not fight your pet. simply brush the teeth that you can reach.
- 5) Repeat on the opposite side of the mouth.
- 6) After your pet becomes comfortable with your finger, place gauze over your finger and rub his or her teeth in a circular motion.

7) When your pet can handle the gauze, introduce a toothbrush during the next brushing session. It is important to make this switch because a bristled toothbrush cleans below the gum line where gauze cannot reach. Apply bristles at a 45 degree angle to ensure that they are reaching below the gum line.

8) Gradually add toothpaste designed for dogs or cats; we recommend CET toothpaste. Do not use baking soda or human toothpaste as these can be harmful to your pet.

9) Help keep your pet calm by praising them, speaking reassuringly and keeping the brushing sessions short. Remember you will not always have a perfect teeth brushing session, but it's important to keep trying.

Note: Most of the accumulation of tartar and resultant gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) develops on the outside of the teeth, so brushing the inside of the teeth is not necessary.

Also, tartar does not readily accumulate between your pet's teeth, so brushing the surfaces between the teeth is not as important.

### **Other Considerations for a Healthy Mouth**

Hard treats and teeth cleaning biscuits can help your pet's mouth stay clean in between brushings. We recommend an oral rinse and enzyme coated rawhide strips and treats from CET.

You should also be sure to regularly examine your pet's mouth for signs of periodontal disease. Brownish teeth, consistently bad breath, swollen or bleeding gums and pus between the teeth and gums are all warning signs.

If your dog or cat has these symptoms, consult the staff and veterinarians at Vermont Integrative Veterinary Associates right away. Our office number is 888-4201; we are open for scheduled appointments Monday through Friday from 8:00am until 5:00pm, and on an emergency basis all other hours, 7 days a week.



### **Vermont Integrative Veterinary Associates**

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