

TOOTHBRUSHING 101

Healthy Teeth Start at Home

Dental care is often an overlooked area of pet health care, even though periodontal disease is the most common diagnosis for our pets. Doggie breath is not normal and maybe the first indicator of periodontal disease. We recommend daily home dental care for your pets as a way of reducing the progression of periodontal disease.

Tooth brushing can begin at any age. This process may take some getting use to for the pet and the owner, so we encourage a gradual introduction over several weeks.

Step 1: Acquaint your pet with having their mouth handled

Using your hand gently lift your pet's lips and rub your fingers on their teeth and gums. In the beginning this can be a short time working up to a minute per day. After each session, reward your pet to make a positive experience. The reward can be an activity they enjoy like getting brushed, playing ball or a small food treat such as a piece of dry kibble.

Step 2: Introduce a thin washcloth, piece of gauze or tooth brush

If using a thin washcloth or piece of gauze wrap it around your finger and gently wipe in a back and forth motion on the teeth and gums focusing at the gum line area concentrating your efforts on the lip side of the teeth. Start with the first sessions being around 30 seconds working your way up to 1-2 minutes, don't forget the reward afterward.

When ready to use a tooth brush, choose a soft bristled brush that fits your hand and is easy for you to handle. Hold the brush at a 45 degree angle to the tooth, moving the brush in small ovals focusing on the area around the gum line. You can work your way up from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes. Avoid using human tooth paste, there are veterinary products designed for your pet to swallow.

If your pet is reluctant, go slow so they can get used to the routine. If you think your pet is in pain, stop and seek advice from the VHC. If your pet shows signs of aggression stop so no one is injured.

