



## **Pet Dental Home Care**

Did you know that 75% of dogs and cats show signs of oral disease by age 3? Keeping your pet's mouth clean and healthy helps prevent painful and costly infections and dental extractions. Talk to your veterinarian about your pet's dental health. One of the most significant things you can do to take control of your pet's health is to provide good oral home care.

Oral care is important for the overall health of your pet. There are several ways to maintain your pet's oral health including brushing, dental chews, dental diets, oral rinses/gels, and water additives.

### **Brushing**

The best care is brushing your pet's teeth daily! There are toothbrushes and toothpastes designed for animals that come in various sizes and flavors. Human toothpaste can be toxic to animals and cause digestive upset so should not be used.

#### **Getting Started:**

Make it a fun game! Let your pet experience the taste of the toothpaste as a "treat". Once they enjoy the paste, try using a finger toothbrush to condition your pet to having their teeth brushed and mouth handled by starting slowly and praising them throughout the process.

#### **How to Brush:**

Start by concentrating on brushing the large cheek teeth and canine teeth by gently raising the animal's lips on one side and placing the brush along the gum-line and rubbing in a circular motion for finger brushes and a back and forth motion for regular toothbrushes. In order to brush the lower teeth, you would need to open your pet's mouth just a little. Once your pet is used to having their mouth handled, you can progress to brushing all of the teeth. It is only necessary to brush the outsides of the teeth, don't worry about the tips or insides of the teeth and tongue unless your pet is very cooperative because the animal's tongue tends to remove plaque from the insides of the teeth. Ideally, you should try to brush the teeth for approximately 30 seconds per side daily, but only brush as long and often as your pet will tolerate. Above all, make brushing a positive, fun experience with lots of praise!

### **Oral Rinses and Oral Gels**

Another way to help maintain your pet's oral health is to apply oral rinses or gels that are formulated to reduce the amount of plaque biofilm on the teeth as well as maintain healthy gums by inhibiting odor causing bacteria. A 1/2" strip of the Oratene Gel can be applied to the upper and lower gums daily.

Water additives, such as Oratene Water Additive, have natural enzymes that remove plaque biofilm and reduce odor causing bacteria. The water additive should be added to fresh drinking water (2 pumps per 1 quart of water) and changed daily for best use.

## **Dental Chew Products**

In addition to brushing or rinses, there are other options to maintain oral health including dental chews and dental diets. You should monitor your pet while they are chewing on dental chews, including CET chews and Greenies, to ensure that they do not swallow them whole or choke on them. CET chews for dogs are available in various sizes and helps loosen tartar, provides plaque control, and freshens breath with their natural antiseptic and abrasive texture. Many cats like the taste of Greenies treats which help loosen tartar and maintain oral health.

Dental diets including Hills T/D can be fed as a primary diet or as treats to help reduce plaque, tartar and staining on teeth as well as reduce bad breath. These diets only work for animals that chew the kibble because the chewing action of the large kibble scrubs away plaque and tartar.

## **Watch for Symptoms of Oral Disease**

It is important to monitor your pet for signs of oral disease. The following are signs that your pet may have a problem in their mouth or gastrointestinal system and should be checked by a veterinarian:

- Bad breath
- Excessive drooling
- Inflamed gums
- Loose teeth
- Tumors in the gums or cysts under the tongue
- Painful around mouth, bleeding from mouth
- Loss of appetite or loss of weight

If you have any questions about dental home care or dental products, please ask your veterinarian or veterinary technician. Your veterinarian will perform an oral examination as part of a routine physical exam. Many pets will still need periodic professional dental cleanings despite good oral home care. Taking steps now to keep your pet's mouth healthy will have lasting and long term benefits to your pets overall health and well-being.