



## Tooth Brushing

We appreciate that brushing your pets teeth can be challenging if they are not accustomed to the procedure. For this reason it should be started at a young age and become part of their routine. That's not to say that old dog's (or cats) can't learn new tricks!

Brushing teeth is gold standard in preventing dental disease, it works for you, right? Studies show that brushing is the best method of removing and preventing plaque build up. Here are some tips to help you introduce:

- 1 Introduce a brushing programme to pets gradually, avoid over-restraining your pet and keep brushing sessions short and positive. A cat or small dog can be held in your lap, praise and reassure your pet throughout the process.
- 2 At first, dip a finger into beef stock for dogs or tuna water for cats. Rub the soaked finger gently over the pet's mouth and teeth. Make the initial sessions short and positive.
- 3 Gradually introduce gauze over the finger and gently scrub the teeth in a circular motion. Try to focus on the gum line, start at the front of the mouth and then move to the back upper then lower gum areas.
- 4 Finally, you can introduce a soft toothbrush designed for pets. Don't use toothpaste designed for humans as it could upset the animal's stomach. VetEnt clinics have specially designed toothbrushes and toothpaste products for you to choose from.



## Proactive Animal Care for Pets

Animal care is not just about building a great relationship with your local vet; animal care is about understanding your pet's health.

At VetEnt, our animal care team recognise that you want highly knowledgeable and skilled veterinarians, who will also take the time to ensure you understand what is happening with your pet at every life stage. We're always there to help you reach a decision that is right for you.

Care is about treatment prevention, at VetEnt, our aim is to keep your pet in optimal health by being proactive through offering immunisation programmes, neutering, flea treatments, worming products, and appropriate nutrition. If your pet requires veterinary attention, you can rest assured that you'll find an animal care team of experienced vets and passionate vet nurses, equipped with the latest technology. Your local VetEnt animal care team pride themselves on being committed to providing a service that will ensure your pet lives an enjoyable and healthy life.

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## What is dental disease?

There are two components to dental disease in dogs and cats. Firstly, there is **reversible** dental disease involving tartar and plaque build up. When addressed promptly the mouth has a good chance of returning to normal and health.

**Irreversible** dental disease is called periodontal disease this is when reversible dental disease continues to such an extent that the ligaments holding the tooth in place are compromised. Periodontal disease is a painful and progressive inflammatory condition involving bacteria attacking the gums, ligament and bony tissues which surround and support the teeth. As such, teeth often need extraction.



## How does dental disease start and progress?

Some animals are lucky to have a natural resistance to tartar and calculi build-up and subsequent periodontal disease. Others are not so fortunate, the severity also increases significantly as pets age.

Dental disease initially starts with plaque build-up. Plaque is an invisible slime of bacteria that forms on the tooth - it's what makes the tooth feel 'furry'. Plaque then progresses to calculi which is a combination of the bacterial plaque and minerals within saliva. It forms a hard deposit which sits over the tooth. This deposit of hard bacteria sitting over the tooth deteriorates the structure holding the tooth in place and compromises tooth integrity. In addition, this bacterial build-up causes inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) which becomes red and painful and subsequently bleed excessively.



## Sign of dental disease

- ✦ Bad breath
- ✦ Dribbling saliva
- ✦ Pawing at the mouth
- ✦ Bleeding gums
- ✦ Tooth loss
- ✦ Subdued behaviour
- ✦ Change of eating habits
- ✦ Reusing to eat



## Why is it important to prevent and treat periodontal disease?

The early stage of periodontal disease (gingivitis) is reversible. When left untreated however, gingivitis will progress to severe periodontal disease which leads to bone and tooth loss. Most of us know the agony of sore gums or tooth ache, so we can imagine how an animal might feel when they experience the pain of periodontal disease.

In addition there are proven links between dental disease and other serious systemic diseases that arise when teeth are left to deteriorate. When gums become inflamed and bleed or teeth loosen, bacteria in the mouth can move into the blood system. Once in circulation the bacteria move through to internal organ structures with high blood flow like the kidneys, liver, lung, heart and even brain. If bacteria lodge in these organs, they have the potential to cause great destruction. This could have fatal consequences for your pet.



## How is dental disease prevented and treated?

In order to protect your animals teeth it is essential that you provide them with regular home and veterinary care. Options include a combination of:

- ✦ Regular pet health checks
- ✦ Professional dental cleaning (to remove plaque and calculus)
- ✦ Dental diets and chews
- ✦ Tooth brushing
- ✦ Use of dental toys for play



## Tips for at home dental care

Dental hygiene starts at home by looking in your pets mouth. Look for warning signs of dental disease such as bad breath, red and swollen gums, a yell-brown crust of tartar around the gum line (particularly on the back teeth), and pain or bleeding when you touch the gums or mouth. If you have any doubt, don't wait for your pets annual health check, get it looked at straight away by your veterinarian.

There are a number of products that you can use at home to help prevent the build-up of plaque and tartar. It is beneficial to start home dental care in young pets where dental disease is not yet present. Prevention is always better than treatment, however if dental disease already exists we would recommend a dental scale and polish to get the mouth healthy again. Once the teeth are clean home dental care is once again effective.



## Diet

One of the most convenient and effective ways to combat oral disease is feeding specially formulated foods scientifically proven in reducing plaque and tartar build up. Dry diets are recommended over wet diets as the mechanical abrasion of crunching through biscuits help clean the tooth. Some pets are reluctant to eat biscuits, but you can persuade them by either wetting the diet to soften or gradually adding biscuit to their existing diet.

