



Homecare for My Pet's Teeth

Home care should be started after a thorough oral dental exam by your veterinarian, ideally after a professional cleaning. The GOLD standard of home care is brushing their teeth. The silver option is oral rinses or sprays that can be done on a daily basis. Finally, the bronze option is using dental chews, toys, or using a dental diet.

Gold standard: by brushing your pet's teeth you will be removing the plaque, bacteria buildup which mineralizes to form calculus (tartar). Once calculus has formed it can lead to infection and further deterioration of the tooth's structure. It is best to brush your pet's teeth on a daily basis; however, studies have shown that brushing at least 3-4 times weekly helps maintain adequate oral hygiene. There are toothbrushes available that are made for pets, finger brushes, toddler-sized toothbrushes, or even gauze wrapped around your finger that can be used. Pet friendly toothpastes are available in chicken, beef, seafood or even mint flavored (if preferred by owner) and are made with the expectation to be swallowed (CET® Enzymatic Toothpaste for Dogs & Cats). Human toothpaste, due to the fluoride content is not meant to be used on your pet and may make them ill if used.

Silver standard: oral rinses can be used in conjunction with brushing if your pet has more sensitive gums or is recovering from oral surgery. They contain an antiseptic agent which help kill off the bacteria that leads to periodontal or gum disease. However, they cannot get into the grooves of the teeth or below the gum line to clean. Rinsing after each meal is ideal, or at least on a daily basis. Healthymouth® is a water additive with the VOHC seal that decreases plaque and calculus build-up. There are different rinses available, CET® Oral Hygiene Rinse, MAXI/GUARD® Oral Cleansing Gel.

Bronze standard: chews or treats for your pet are also a way to help maintain adequate oral hygiene. Appropriate chews would include anything with the VOHC (Veterinary Oral Health Council) seal of approval. They provide some abrasion on the tooth to help remove the plaque and tartar. Chews should be soft enough to have a little "give" to them. You should be able to make an indentation in the product with your fingernail. Hard chewing products can cause broken teeth, torn or cut gums, and may not be digestible if swallowed, which can lead to foreign body issues. Some foods are available that can be given as a solitary diet (discuss with your veterinarian to make the right decision for your pet) or given as treats. Prescription Diet® t/d® by Hills pet nutrition, or ROYAL CANIN Veterinary Diet® Feline/Canine DENTAL DD are a few examples.

Using any, or all 3, of these homecare options on a daily basis, in conjunction with routine oral and physical exams by your veterinarian, and advised dental cleanings will help maintain your pets mouth. As a result of taking an active part in your pet's oral care, you are helping reduce the effects of dental disease and the potential harmful effects it can have on your pet.