

# Dental Home Care

The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends a full dental cleaning every six months for your pet, just the same as your dentist recommends for you. Still, imagine what that cleaning procedure would be like for you if you did not brush your teeth at all between dental visits.

Dental home care is the single most important aspect of regular dental care. With proper home care, your pet may not need that six month dentistry, thus saving you the expense and your pet the extra anesthetic.

## **WHAT KIND OF HOME CARE IS AVAILABLE?**

### **The Toothbrush Kit**

Just as with your own teeth, nothing beats brushing. The fibers of the tooth brush are able to reach between teeth and under gums to pick out tiny deposits of food. A toothbrush acts as a tiny scrub brush for the closest possible cleaning.

Notice the shape of the canine and feline brushes and how they conform to a pet's mouth. You can use a human toothbrush but you will probably find it difficult to manipulate in the pet's mouth.

Finger brushes are available and are smaller for puppies and kittens.

### **Toothpaste**

*DO NOT USE A HUMAN TOOTHPASTE ON YOUR PET.* Toothpaste for people contains sudsing agents which are not expected to be swallowed. These will upset your pet's stomach as your pet is not able to rinse out his or her mouth.

Pet toothpaste comes in a variety of flavors: mint (which people tend to prefer as a scent but animals do not prefer as a flavor), chicken, liver, and malt (generally preferred as a flavor by pets).

### **Dental Spray**

Some pets will not allow anyone to actually touch their teeth. For these pets there is dental spray which can be sprayed into the mouth as an anti-plaque wash. As noted above, the spray can be applied to a tissue or cloth and rubbed on the teeth as well.

### **Dental Treats**

Some cats will not allow anyone to reach into their mouths for any reason and will not tolerate brushing, spraying, rinsing or any other home care. For these animals dental treats represent an excellent method of dental home care. Feline dental treats are freeze dried fish pieces specially treated with enzymatic dentrifice to help remove plaque. We recommend a treat daily for routine home care.

In the dog, research has shown that daily rawhide chewing can be as beneficial as brushing. We carry special compressed rawhide chews by Nylabone which cannot unroll and cause obstruction in the GI tract.

## T/D DIET



Realizing the difficulties involved in dental home care, Hills has created a diet designed to break calculus off of teeth. If you would like the benefits of performing dental home care without actually having to schedule time, this may be a viable option for you.

### DO'S AND DON'TS OF DENTAL HOME CARE

- DON'T USE A HUMAN TOOTHPASTE ON YOUR PET
- DO USE A TOOTHBRUSH WITHOUT ANY PASTE AT FIRST SO THAT YOUR PET MAY GET USED TO THE OBJECT IN THE MOUTH BEFORE HAVING TO CONTEND WITH FLAVOR
- DON'T ATTEMPT TO CLEAN THE INNER SURFACE OF YOUR PET'S TEETH. NATURAL SALIVA CLEANS THIS SURFACE ON ITS OWN
- DO TRY TO PERFORM DENTAL HOME CARE AT LEAST ONCE DAILY
- DON'T PERFORM DENTAL HOME CARE DURING THE FIRST WEEK AFTER A FULL DENTISTRY IN THE HOSPITAL AS YOUR PET'S GUMS MAY BE TENDER
- DON'T LET YOUR DOG CHEW ON COW HOOVES AS THESE ARE TOO HARD AND TEETH MAY BREAK AGAINST THEM
- DON'T CONSIDER DENTAL HOME CARE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FULL DENTAL CLEANING IF YOUR PET HAS MORE ADVANCED DENTAL DISEASE.

Special "starter" dental kits for puppies and kittens are available as well. These will help you accommodate your young pet to dental care right from the start.