

FOCUS

O N P E T H E A L T H

EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT PET ORAL HEALTH CARE

A majority of veterinarians recommend brushing pets' teeth—they know it's important. Most will also recommend dental pastes and gels for teeth brushing. However, when a large number of veterinarians at a national veterinary conference were asked if they brush their own pets' teeth, only four out of 400 said they performed the task daily. Even the experts can't give their pets the attention they deserve. So what can you do about the difficult task of maintaining your own pet's oral health? You can start by making sure you have all the information you need.

Top 5 Pet Oral Health Care Myths

1. My veterinarian is not concerned about my pet's dental health

Dental care of dogs and cats is one of the most commonly overlooked areas of pet health care. In fact, a recent veterinary study showed that approximately two-thirds of pet owners do not provide the dental care that is recommended as essential by veterinarians. What's more, the American Veterinary Dental Society reports that 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats show signs of oral disease by age three.

2. Oral disease is not a serious problem for pets

Dental disease doesn't affect just the mouth. It can lead to more serious health problems. Periodontal bacteria can enter the bloodstream and travel to major organs and begin new infections. Research suggests this may contribute to the development of heart disease, increase the risk of vascular diseases and pose a serious threat to animals with other disease conditions like diabetes.

3. Doggie breath is likely caused by pet food

Periodontal disease is an infection of the tissue surrounding the teeth that takes hold in progressive stages and can cause bad breath. It starts out as

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a bacterial film called plaque. The bacteria attach to the teeth. When the bacteria die they can be calcified by calcium in saliva. This forms a hard, rough substance called tartar or calculus, which allows more plaque to accumulate. If left to spread, plaque can lead to gingivitis — an inflammation of the gums — causing it to become red and swollen and to bleed easily. Volatile sulfur gases are produced by this process, and they are very irritating to the gums and have the characteristic smell of doggie breath. As plaque and calculus develop below the gum line, professional cleaning will be needed to help manage it. If the plaque and tartar buildup continues unchecked, infection can form around the root of the tooth.

4. Dental cleaning is enough for my pet's oral care

Even if you commit your pet to dental cleaning every six months, ultimate dental care requires good home care. This may include an oral rinse, a dental gel and dental diets and treats. Unfortunately, the average pet visiting a veterinary practice will likely not have their teeth scaled and polished more than two or three times in their lifetime even though they need dental cleaning every 6 to 12 months. There are a number of factors that contribute to the lack of dental compliance, including expensive procedures, fear of the general anesthetic, wrong recommendations for procedures and owners who do not know the importance of dental cleaning.

5. Occasional brushing is good for my dog's teeth

Veterinary dental specialists recommend that you brush your pet's teeth daily in order to maintain their oral hygiene. Most pet owners are not very good about this and try to brush their pet's teeth infrequently. Although any oral care is better than no oral care, brushing once in a while is not as effective. The combination of brushing, oral rinses, oral care diets and professional veterinary dental cleaning will give your pet the best chance of maintaining optimum oral health.

Closing Thoughts

Having knowledge about what is best for your dog does not mean you have the time and the commitment to perform this difficult task daily. We all have busy lives, and we want to give our pets the care and attention they deserve. Oxyfresh's great line of pet oral care products makes it possible. Use Oxyfresh products to save time and to show your pet you really care.

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