



The Truth About Pet Dental Care

PETS NEED DENTAL CARE, TOO™

For most of us, caring for our teeth and gums has been part of our daily routine for as long as we can remember. Just like it is for you, oral health care is important for pets – regular, professional care from veterinarians and home care from pet owners to keep plaque removed. Daily brushing and feeding special pet foods, such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® t/d®, can help.

PET DENTAL FACTS

- Periodontal disease is the most prevalent disease among dogs and cats.
- An astounding 80 percent of dogs and cats show signs of oral disease by age three, according to the American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS).
- Periodontal disease is common in dogs of smaller breeds because dogs' teeth often are too large for their mouths, forcing the teeth closer together.
- Dogs start out with 28 deciduous (baby) teeth, cats start out with 26 deciduous teeth. By six months of age, these baby teeth fall out and are replaced by permanent teeth, 42 in the dog and 30 in the cat.
- Broken teeth are a common problem for dogs, especially among outdoor dogs. According to veterinary dental experts, aggressive chewing on hard objects is a primary cause of broken teeth in dogs.
- Odontoclastic resorptive lesions are the most common tooth disease in domestic cats. Studies show that about 28 percent of domestic cats develop at least one of these painful lesions during their lifetime.

CAUSES OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Plaque is a colorless film that contains large amounts of bacteria. If left unchecked, plaque builds up, creating infection, destroying gums and resulting in the loss of the tissues and bone that support the teeth. Preventive oral care can reduce the formation of plaque and help maintain proper oral health throughout a pet's life.

SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE

All pets are at risk for developing dental problems. Once a pet displays any of the warning signs below, serious periodontal disease may be present. Don't let clients wait for these signs. Rather, encourage them to start a preventive program of veterinarian-supervised dental care today.

- Tooth loss
- Subdued behavior
- Abnormal drooling
- Dropping food out of the mouth
- Swallowing food whole
- Bad breath
- Yellow-brown crust on teeth
- Bleeding gums
- Going to the food bowl, but not eating
- Change of chewing or eating habits

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Poor Oral Hygiene: Ignoring the condition of a pet's mouth can lead to periodontal disease, tooth loss and other health problems.
- Breed: Periodontal disease is more common in smaller breeds of dogs and certain breeds of cats.
- Age: Periodontal disease is more common as pets grow older.

TREATMENT OF ORAL DISEASE

- Pet owners should look for warning signs of oral disease. Common indications include bad breath, a change in eating or chewing habits, pawing at the face or mouth and depression. If any of these signs are present, the pet should be taken to the veterinarian for a dental exam.
- Pet owners can reduce the risk of oral disease. The first step in preventing oral disease is a routine physical examination, including a dental exam.
- Pet owners should practice a regular dental care regimen at home, which may include brushing the pets' teeth with specially formulated toothpaste.
- Pet owners should schedule regular follow-up care with their family veterinarians and ask about specially formulated foods with proven benefits in plaque and tartar removal.