

## 10 Tips To keep Pets Teeth Healthy

- 1) Take your pet to a veterinarian for a dental examination. You do not need to wait for a problem to appear.
- 2) Homecare is the key to keeping the oral cavity healthy. Brushing is the best modality, as it is in people. In addition, many preventative measures can be employed including specially formulated foods proven effective in decreasing plaque and calculus accumulation, treats, and water additives.
- 3) The seal of acceptance from the VOHC (Veterinary Oral Health Council), an organization initiated by board-certified diplomates in veterinary dentistry to guide consumers, appears on products with defined standards for plaque and calculus control in dogs and cats. ([www.vohc.org](http://www.vohc.org))
- 4) Puppies have 28 temporary teeth that erupt at about three to four weeks of age. They have 42 permanent teeth that begin to emerge at about four months of age. It is important to notice the erupting teeth and their timing to detect problems early.
- 5) Kittens have 26 temporary teeth that begin to erupt at about two to three weeks of age. They have 30 permanent teeth that erupt at about three to four months.
- 6) Dental radiographs (x-rays) are intra-oral films that are the key to diagnosing oral pathology. More than ½ of the tooth is below the gumline, therefore hidden from view without dental x-rays.
- 7) Symptoms of gum disease in dogs include yellow and brown build-up of calculus along the gumline, inflamed red gums and persistent halitosis (bad breath). Fractured teeth are a common problem, especially among outdoor dogs. According to veterinary dental experts, aggressive chewing on hard objects, such as commercially available cow hooves and rawhides, are a primary cause of broken teeth.

- 8) Symptoms of periodontal disease in cats include yellow and brown calculus (tarter) buildup along the gum line, red inflamed gums, and persistent bad breath. 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. Only a small percentage of these painful cavity-like lesions can be diagnosed without intra-oral dental x-rays.
- 9) All lumps and bumps in the mouth need to be evaluated by a veterinarian. Oral neoplasia (cancer) can be sneaky and can appear as a loose tooth or as an obvious growth. There are many types of oral tumors and many can be successfully treated if caught early.
- 10) Our pets' dental health is VERY IMPORTANT. Periodontal (gum) disease is the number one diagnosed problem in dogs and cats. By the age of two, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have some form of periodontal disease. In addition, 10% of dogs have a fractured tooth with pulpal exposure. This means the nerve is exposed and this is extremely painful. These teeth, if left untreated, can become abscessed. Intra-oral bacteria travel to other organs in the body and can cause further harm if left untreated. Periodontal inflammation and infection have been linked to heart, liver, and kidney disease, diabetes, and infection of bone or metal implants. Therefore, oral infections must be prevented through home care and routine oral evaluation by a veterinarian.

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