



## Home Dental Care

### General Information

Plaque or tartar development is the most common cause of dental disease in pets. Periodontal disease has been estimated to affect 90% of dogs and cats over two year of age, and it essentially starts with accumulation of dental plaque. Studies have shown that regularly brushing your pet's teeth is the most efficient way to prevent accumulation of plaque.

Train your pet to have its mouth handled before introducing the toothbrush. Wrap nylon, gauge or a wash cloth around your finger and gently wipe the gums. Make it rewarding and fun for your pet *but be cautious, as even a familiar pet may bite!*

*Cleaning applicators:* Any soft-bristled nylon toothbrush can be used. Your veterinarian can provide special brushes or you can use the human kind. If the gums are infected, you may use cotton swabs soaked with medicated dental preparations. You can wrap gauze around your finger and use it to wipe the gums and teeth. In cases of a severely infected mouth, you may want to change toothbrushes at least weekly to prevent reinfection of your pet's mouth. As an alternative, after using and rinsing the brush off with hot water, soak it in a mixture of chorine solution prepared by adding 2 drops of household liquid bleach to one cup of warm water. Soak the brush for at least one minute, then allow it to air dry until the next dental session.

Brushing action should be directed at the gum line at the base of the teeth. Be gentle and offer a treat or praise at the end of the session. Once daily brushing is adequate and you only need to brush the outside of the teeth, not the inside.

*Dentifrices:* **Do not** use baking soda or salt to brush your pet's teeth. Your pet will swallow them and the added sodium can be harmful, especially if your pet has an existing cardiovascular condition. Several animal dental preparations are available through your veterinarian. These will help you do the best job with the least effort. Some of these include CET, Petzlife oral care gel, Maxiguard Gel, Nolvadent and Biotene solution.

If your pet already has tartar accumulated on its teeth, an initial dental cleaning is often essential before starting a routine, home dental cleaning program.

If you are unable to clean your pet's teeth, the following chewing items will help reduce plaque: Nylafloss and Nylabone.

Both home and regular professional care are required for the most successful dental program.