



## PREVENTATIVE HOME DENTAL CARE

Clean teeth and healthy gums are just as important to our pets as they are to us. Several studies in recent years have determined that dental disease is the most common disease in dogs and cats. Maintaining healthy teeth and gums is an important part of preventative care that you can provide for your pet.

The best way to maintain healthy teeth and gums is to brush your pet's teeth regularly. Ideally this would be part of your daily routine. To get your pet to accept dental care, begin by handling your pet's mouth and lips gently, offering treats if necessary.

After 7-10 days of this, put some flavored pet toothpaste on your finger and let your pet lick it off, or gently wipe it on the teeth. Once this is accepted, using a soft bristled pediatric toothbrush or the finger brush with the special toothpaste is usually well accepted by the pet. Again introduce this mouth handling gently and gradually, and reward the pet for cooperating. DON'T use human toothpaste as most pets don't like the taste or foaminess of it and fluoride may be harmful to pets.

Using oval rotations around the teeth, and especially the gumline, gently brush the teeth. There is no need to rinse the mouth when using the pet toothpaste. **Daily tooth and gum care is best, but at least 3 times per week** will still help to reduce tartar buildup and gum disease.

**For those pets that just won't tolerate brushing, or for owners that have a difficult time with brushing, there are some alternatives:**

- 1) **Rawhide chews** are available (**Chew Eez**) that soften and scrape away tartar as a dog chews on them, and a fish based cat dental chew (**CET Chew**) is also available. Other wafer type rawhides can also be effective.
- 2) **Several "Dental Diets"** are available that can be effective at helping keep the teeth clean. Unlike regular hard food that is chewed and swallowed after only short contact with the teeth, these diets have a texture that allows the teeth to penetrate the pieces of food and wipes away plaque before it hardens into tartar. We usually recommend it as a daily treat **given after meals**.
- 3) **Oral care gels** now available can be very effective when applied to the teeth at bedtime. These products soften and break down hard tartar over time.

With some gentle handling and coaxing, most pets will not only allow home dental care, most actually enjoy it.

It can't be over emphasized how important dental care is to provide our pets with long, happy and healthy lives.

**DAVE WICKERSHAM, D.V.M.**  
**1720 GROVE AVENUE · WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WI – 54494**  
**TELEPHONE: (715) 421-4200**  
**WWW.WOODLANDVETCLINICLTD.COM**