



Signs of a Dirty Mouth:

February is Pet Dental Health Month

Every day we love our pets and do things for them to keep them safe, happy, and healthy. One of those 'things' should include helping them keep a healthy mouth. Periodontal disease begins with the bacteria in the mouth, its movement around the teeth, and its migration into the gum (gingiva). Once below the gum line the bacteria begin to multiply and cause damage to the tissue that supports the teeth. **Signs of a dirty mouth** include bad breath (halitosis), decreased appetite, unwillingness to eat hard foods, excess salivation, pawing at the mouth, and/or gums that bleed easily. Another sure sign a dental cleaning is needed is swelling of the face and nose....bad tooth roots like to create abscesses and it causes facial swelling.

At your pet's annual check-up your vet should take a good look in your pet's mouth to assess the teeth and gum. Often it is followed by the recommendation to bring your pet in for a dental cleaning.



So what actually happens when your pet goes in for a dental cleaning?

Pre-Dental exam

- Signs of *bad breath*.
- Do any teeth look loose, *damaged*, and/or broken?
- Is the gum line inflamed (red) and/or irritated?
- Are there any other *abnormalities* noted?
- They will also often ask you if your pet is eating well and/or salivating excessively.
- Most pre-dental exams often include *blood work* to make sure it is safe to put your pet under anesthesia.
 - If your pet is over 7yrs old it is highly recommended to do bloodwork....if it is not required by your vet, please request it be done.

Once your pet is under anesthesia

- The veterinary staff do a more *thorough oral exam*. They look for abnormal teeth, missing teeth, scout out teeth that need to be pulled, growths, and other abnormalities of the mouth
- Chunks of *tartar* are *removed* from tooth surface
- *Plaque* is *removed* from below the gum line
- Teeth are *polished* to remove imperfections on the tooth surface
- The mouth is re-explored to make sure nothing was missed



Missouri German Shepherd Rescue (MoGS)
Doggie Health & Wellness Team
Wellness Wednesday Series on Canine Health

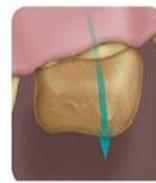
At Home Care

The best prevention is to *start young* and get your puppy used to at home cleaning techniques. If your pet is older and you want to start, or you just picked up your pet from the vet after their dental cleaning and want to keep those clean chompers clean there are many things you can do at home:

- Brush the teeth – vet offices and pet stores carry pet-safe toothpastes and toothbrushes that can easily reach the back of the mouth.
 - *Don't use human toothpaste...it's toxic if swallowed and dogs don't know to spit it out*
 - Start slow. First use our finger to gently rub your pet's teeth, then gradually work up to using the toothbrush
- Dental Chews – some chews have been shown to decrease the plaque build-up on the tooth surface. Look on the packaging for the **VOHC** (*Veterinary Oral Health Council*) seal of approval. This is equivalent to having the American Dental Association (ADA) approve human oral health products.
- Dental rinses – Pet safe oral rinses and water additives are also available that decrease the bacterial load in the mouth
- Special Diets – Hard kibble won't necessarily help keep teeth clean. But there are special diets that have kibble that are larger and semi-soft – this causes a scrapping action as the tooth sinks into it.
 - This can be used as the main diet, mixed half and half with the regular food, and/or as a treat
 - Examples include Science Diet's T/D



Works like a toothbrush to clean teeth and freshen breath as pets chew.



Patented fibre alignment helps kibble stay in contact with the tooth surface.



Gently scrubs away bacteria laden plaque for better oral and overall health.



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Dr. Andy Roark has created a great YouTube video series about ‘Dog Breath’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVgBNVc0hPo>

A list of products approved by VOHC

http://www.vohc.org/accepted_products.htm

Merck Veterinary Manual also has some great information about periodontal disease in pets.

http://www.merckmanuals.com/vet/digestive_system/dentistry/periodontal_disease_in_small_animals.html

Since February is National Pet Dental Health Month, many veterinary offices offer special discounts to pet dental cleanings during the month of February.....call your local vet to discuss how to get your pet on the right path to proper dental health.