

# Dental Care!

Flanary Veterinary Clinic (270) 898-9738

## February is National Pet Dental Health Care Month

*During the month of February, Flanary Veterinary Clinic is offering a 10% saving on dental cleanings.*

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 you, your pet needs dental care, too – regularly. One of the best things you can do for your family pet is to take good preventive care of his/her teeth and gums.

The bacteria that lurk in a pet's mouth may be the cause of bad breath and more. Bacteria accumulation can lead to oral disease and increase the risk for disease in other organs, such as the heart, liver and kidneys, according to research.

The American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS) reports that 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats show signs of oral disease by age three. In fact, oral disease is the most common health problem treated in small animal clinics today.

Flanary Veterinary Clinic, Hills' Pet Nutrition, Inc., and the American Veterinary Medical Association, urge all pet owners to undertake a three-step dental care.

### **Three Steps to Success**

Your pet needs dental care – regular, professional care from your veterinarian, as well as care at home from you. The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends that pet owners follow three basic steps:

**Step 1: Take your pet to the veterinarian for a dental exam.** Don't wait for his annual checkup if you suspect a problem.

**Step 2: Begin a dental care regimen at home.** Dr. Flanary can suggest steps that may include brushing your pet's teeth. One of the most convenient and effective ways to combat oral disease is feeding specially formulated foods proven effective in combating plaque and tartar buildup. The Seal of Acceptance from the Veterinary Oral Health Council, an organization initiated by members of the American Veterinary Dental Society to guide consumers, appears on products that meet defined standards for plaque and tartar control in dogs and cats.

**Step 3: Schedule regular veterinary checkups.** These are essential in helping Dr. Flanary monitor the progress of your pet's dental health routine. At the very least an annual visit is very important.

### **Brushing Your Pet's Teeth**

A complete home dental care program for your pet often will include both regular brushing and proper nutritional food.

Introduce a brushing program to pets gradually. Avoid over-restraining your pet and keep brushing sessions short and positive. A cat or small dog can be held in your lap. Praise and reassure your pet throughout the process.

At first, dip a finger into beef bouillon for dogs or tuna water for cats. Rub the soaked finger gently over the pet's mouth and teeth. Make the initial sessions short and positive.

Gradually, introduce gauze over the finger and gently scrub the teeth in a circular motion.

Finally, you can introduce a soft toothbrush designed for pets. Use a sensitive or ultra-soft brush designed for people or a brush designed for pets. Special pet toothbrushes are available from Flanary Veterinary Clinic. Do not use toothpaste designed for people because it could upset your pet's stomach. CET makes an excellent beef flavored toothpaste just for your pet.

## ***Stages and Faces of Oral Disease***

Periodontal disease – an infection of the tissue surrounding the teeth – takes hold in progressive stages. Plaque and tartar form naturally when food remains in the cracks and crevices of the teeth, especially at the gum line. Because canned food tends to stick more easily to the surfaces of the teeth, it is somewhat more likely to cause plaque than dry food. But any food will cause problems if the teeth are never cleaned. At this stage the plaque is still soft and brushing or chewing hard food and toys can dislodge it. If left to spread, plaque can lead to gingivitis – an inflammation of gums – causing them to become red and swollen and to bleed easily.

Plaque soon hardens into tartar that forms a wedge separating the tooth from the gum. At this point plaque can grow below the gum line, causing more damage, and professional cleaning is needed to help manage it. If the plaque and tartar buildup continue unchecked, pus can form at the root of the tooth and the tooth becomes impacted.

In the final stages of periodontal disease, the tissues surrounding the tooth are killed, the bony socket holding the tooth in erodes, and the tooth falls out. This is a very painful process for your four-legged friend, but the problems can be averted before they even start.

## ***How Can I Tell If My Dog or Cat Has Gum Disease***

If your pet will allow it, open its mouth and look inside. Look for the warning signs of gum disease – bad breath, red and swollen gums, yellow-brown crust of tartar around the gum line, and pain or bleeding when you touch the gums or mouth. If any of these problems exist, contact Flanary Veterinary Clinic immediately. A professional examination administered by Dr. Flanary should be done now to determine whether a cleaning is required or other measures can be taken to eradicate this problem.



“Foul breath and yellow-brown teeth are not only unappealing, they could indicate a serious gum disease. And that can lead to other health problems.”



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