

# Dental Home Care for Your Dog

*Brushing your pet's teeth daily, or at least 3 times per week, is essential in maintaining proper dental health.*

## Doggy Dental Facts

- Puppies have 28 temporary teeth that emerge at about three to four weeks of age. They have 42 permanent teeth that begin to surface at about four months of age.
- Puppies should lose their baby teeth before the corresponding adult teeth emerge. If a puppy tooth is still in place when an adult tooth begins to show, see your veterinarian to prevent a problem with your dog's bite.
- Signs of a dental problem can include bad breath, yellow-brown crust on teeth, bleeding from the gums, difficulty eating, abnormal drooling, dropping food from the mouth, swallowing food without chewing, losing teeth, pain when the mouth is manipulated, and bad breath. Dogs are not supposed to have "dog breath"!
- Small dog breeds and dogs that have beards are more likely to develop periodontal disease than large dogs because the teeth of small dogs are often too large for their mouths.
- The canine teeth (fangs) of working dogs are essential to allowing the dogs to carry prey and other objects. If these teeth become broken, a veterinary dentist can perform endodontic procedures, such as root canals and metal crown preparation. Procedures are available to treat many teeth that previously would have been extracted.
- A broken tooth is a common problem especially among outdoor dogs. Aggressive chewing on hard objects such as bones and cow hooves is often the primary cause.

**Please schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings with your veterinarian.**

*They are vital to your pet's overall health.*

### 1 Select an appropriate time

Find a quiet, convenient time when you and your dog are both relaxed.

### 2 Acquaint your dog with the process

For the first few sessions, don't use a toothbrush. Hold your dog as if you are cuddling and gently stroke the outside of his/her cheeks with your finger. After your pet is comfortable with that, try rubbing your finger along the gums. Next, place a dab of toothpaste on your finger and let him/her taste it. We suggest C.E.T. which is especially made for pets. Do not use human toothpaste.



### 3 Introduce the toothbrush

Place a small amount of toothpaste on the first three rows of the toothbrush. We suggest a small, soft-bristled brush. In a slow back and forth motion, brush one or two teeth and the gum line. This gets your dog accustomed to the feel of the brush. Replace your pet's toothbrush on a regular basis, ideally once a month.



### 4 Begin brushing

Over the next several days, gradually increase the number of teeth brushed. It is important to eventually brush the rear teeth where plaque and tartar have a greater tendency to accumulate. Slowly and gently pull open the cheek with your fingers to reach the back areas. Stop brushing before your dog begins to fuss. If he/she learns to dislike the procedure and figures out that fussing makes you stop more quickly, then brushing is going to get harder rather than easier. Gradually build up to about 30 seconds per side. Concentrate only on the outside surfaces of the teeth (towards the cheek). Dogs accumulate very little tartar on the insides.



### 5 Make brushing a pleasurable experience

Proceed slowly and gently. Stop each session while it is still fun and lavishly praise your dog afterwards with petting and treats. Patience, dedication, and snacks may be necessary! For optimum oral hygiene, brush your dog's teeth every day. Daily brushing will also make you feel better the next time your dog kisses you!

### 6 Consult your veterinarian

For guidance on brushing, or for a customized home-care program, speak with your veterinarian.