

The Range Animal Hospital

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Advanced
Diagnostics, Medicine
Surgery, Dentistry, &
Trauma Care
for
Large & Small Animals

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Brushing your Pets

Teeth

PREVENTIVE DENTAL care is as important in dogs and cats as it is in humans. In fact, dental disease is one of the most common problems veterinarians see today. 85% of all dogs and cats have some form of dental disease, ranging from mild periodontal disease (inflammation in the gums) to tooth root infection and abscess. Veterinarians have known for some time that dental disease is often the cause of other systemic disease. Heart disease and kidney failure commonly result from dental disease. Dental disease is one of the easiest, and least costly diseases to prevent.

We recommend daily dental care at home starting at 8-12 weeks of age, but it is never too late. If significant tartar build up is already present, a professional cleaning is needed first. It is very difficult to remove even a thin layer of tartar with brushing, and it is impossible to remove a thick one. It is also necessary to remove the tartar that collects under the gum line, and to polish the teeth smooth so that the brushing is easier and more effective.

You will need an appropriately sized toothbrush, a larger one for large dogs, or a small child's toothbrush for small dogs and cats. **Arm & Hammer Baking Soda Toothpaste** a good toothpaste for dogs and cats. It does not suds up like the other dentifrices, and it is quite abrasive. Abrasiveness is good in dogs and cats, while it is not at all good for people. Remember, people must brush their teeth for 70, 80, or more years, but dogs and cats do not live quite that long. Abrasive toothpaste will seriously damage a human's teeth over their lifetime, but abrasive toothpaste in our pets will effectively remove plaque, with no important damage.

WEEK 1 - Using your hand, open your pet's mouth and run your finger around his lips and gums, lifting the lips gently. Start with 30 seconds or so and progress to 2 to 3 minutes by the end of the week. Reward each session with a small treat.

WEEK 2 - Introduce the toothbrush to your pet lifting the lips and GENTLY brushing the teeth without toothpaste. Pay particular attention to the outer surface of the back molars, but spend some time on the outer surface of the front teeth. Again start slowly and increase to 2-3 minutes.

WEEK 3- This week add the toothpaste and extend the brushing time. Brush the outer surfaces of all of the teeth, but pay most attention to the back molars.

A FEW POINTERS:

- Don't rush the process; your pet may become resistant.
- Make the session enjoyable and end with a treat. PRAISE HIGHLY.
- You only need to brush the outsides. A dog or cat tongue is abrasive enough to keep the insides very clean.
- Remember, the idea is to remove plaque BEFORE it becomes tartar. This is best done by brushing every day. At the very minimum, twice a week.
- Hard dog food is a VERY POOR substitute for brushing. VERY POOR.
- Special tartar prevention diets are available, but they are not as good as brushing, and they are expensive.
- Brushing at home will reduce the need for professional cleanings.