

Home Dental Care: What to do to Maximize Your Pet's Dental Health

- **Tooth brushing is still #1.** To prevent plaque and tartar buildup, brush your pet's teeth daily using toothpaste (Virbac's C.E.T.®) made for animals. Choose the right toothbrush based on your pet's age and size. Starting in young puppies and kittens helps them become accustomed to home dental care and they can be very accepting of the attention to their teeth. If you can't brush their teeth once a week, there are other home care options available that may be more practical.
- **Water additives.** This product is designed to be added to your pet's water source, and it can help significantly reduce the accumulation of plaque and tartar and address periodontal disease. *Healthy Mouth*® is the first dental water additive to receive the Veterinary Oral Health Council Seal of Acceptance. It is made from 100% natural and organic active ingredients, is kosher, vegan, has no sugar, no fat, and no chemicals. This product has proven to be effective in controlling plaque accumulation, reducing inflammation, diminishing gingivitis, and softening any remaining plaque. It is flavored for dogs and cats and is available in a concentrate that is mixed with water to create an easy-to-use primary water source for your pet. It comes in different flavors and sizes for your convenience.
- **Mechanical Removal** by means other than brushing can still be helpful. Dental chews like *Yummy Combs*® and *OraVet Chews*® and dental diets (T/D®) that help by mechanically removing tartar; the chews probably do better for gingivitis than foods alone. Dental wipes (explained below) can provide mechanical removal almost as well as brushing and allow more coverage of the teeth. Dogs that gulp rather than chew should not be fed chews or large treats for mechanical tartar removal as they will not perform as expected and there is a small risk of obstruction.
- **Soluble zinc salts.** Zinc ascorbate, gluconate, oxide and chloride are incorporated in toothpastes, rinses and gels as antibacterial agents to help decrease plaque formation and malodor. These are helpful in dental wipes or sprays. Infused wipes mechanically remove plaque plus apply plaque control agents to the teeth and gingiva and are quite popular with veterinary professionals. *MaxiGuard*® Dental Wipes include Zinc gluconate. The wiping action is probably the most helpful component.
- **Chlorhexidine.** Chlorhexidine gluconate is one of the leading products used to decrease the accumulation of plaque in people. It is used as an oral rinse to be swished for 30 seconds then expectorated twice daily. This is not feasible with animals. For this reason, chlorhexidine is commonly incorporated with a carrier vehicle such as C.E.T HEXTRA® Chews, dental wipes & sprays.

Gastrointestinal inflammation. Those products that claim control of plaque through chemical means *must* also be safe for the dog or cat to ingest. Excessive protein, preservatives and ingredients such as grain alcohol and xylitol may cause injury to a dog or cat.

Products may be combined. For example, Healthy Mouth® water additive may be used consistently along with *MaxiGuard®* dental wipes or *Yummy Comb® Chews*, which can be used 3-4 times per week for their mechanical advantage. Healthy Mouth® also makes a dental gel for dogs and cats that can be applied along the gumline before bed for an extra bit of protection at night.

Favorite combinations for all dogs:

Healthy Mouth for gingivitis & periodontal disease and
MaxiGuard Wipes nightly as an alternative to brushing (mechanical & chemical action)
Yummy Combs® or *OraVet Chews®* on any days that wipes or brushing are not an option
OR

Nightly brushing for mechanical removal (C.E.T. toothpaste) and
Healthy Mouth® for gingivitis & periodontal disease
OR

Following a professional cleaning and OraVet® application,
repeat Oravet® weekly to help reduce plaque and calculus accumulation and
Healthy Mouth® for gingivitis & periodontal disease

Waxy polymers with, and after, a professional cleaning When applied to professionally cleaned teeth, the OraVet® polymer adheres to the tooth. In doing so, it inhibits bacterial adhesion to the tooth, which significantly decreases plaque and calculus formation by creating an invisible barrier that decreases bacterial attachment. While other products may remove plaque and tartar, waxy polymers constitute a plaque prevention system that is completely safe, tasteless and drug-free. This may be refreshed by weekly application at home via an Oravet® home care kit.

A Special Note: Safety against tooth fracture. Chewing on hard objects can cause severe damage to a dog's teeth, especially their shearing teeth. Deer antlers, bones, nylon products, dried yak milk, pizzle or bully sticks, and hard plastic toys may claim to have dental benefits, but they are too hard and can cause tooth fractures with pulp exposure. Therefore, avoiding giving bones, nylon toys, or any product that does not bend, compress, or dissolve easily in a fluid environment is advisable. This is crucial, especially for dogs that hold the treats with their paws while chewing on the side teeth, as this is when tooth fractures are most likely to occur.