

## Dearborn Family Pet Care recommends a four-step dental plan to greater health for your pet.

### STEP TWO: DAILY BRUSHING

This is why you've got opposable thumbs and your pet doesn't. Buy a special pet toothbrush and toothpaste and do what's right – brush their teeth daily. Start when they're young to get them used to it, but it's never too late to begin proper home dental care. Reward the animal with a treat; they'll associate it with the brushing and won't resist as much.

### STEP THREE: CHOOSING THE RIGHT FOOD

Next, address your pet's diet. Look for the "Seal of Acceptance of the Veterinary Oral Health Council" on foods to determine if they meet standards for plaque and tartar control. Dog biscuits will remove some plaque but cannot clean below the gum line and will not prevent periodontal disease. They're no substitute for daily brushing.

### STEP FOUR: REGULAR CHECKUPS

Regular checkups are imperative to ensure good oral health. Your veterinarian will monitor your pet's progress and look for any signs of advanced stages of bacterial spreading as we described above. Stick to this simple four-step plan and keep your pet's pearly whites shining.



When it comes to dental care, your dog or cat needs to have good oral hygiene just like you.

Mouth problems like gum disease can lead to more health problems, so it's best to get preventive care to be sure a pet's mouth is healthy. In fact, oral disease is the number one health problem diagnosed in small animals.

We recommend a four-step program to greater health for your pet.

### STEP ONE: ANNUAL EXAM

It begins with an annual oral examination by your veterinarian. A dental exam and cleaning (dental prophylaxis) may be required, including removal of plaque above and below the gum line; polishing; and fluoride treatment. Problems in their early stages can be diagnosed and treated. Many dogs age four and older may need to be examined more frequently.

# THE DENTAL ISSUE

## Celebrating National Pet Dental Health Month

February is National Pet Dental Health Month, a great reminder that dental health is about more than just teeth; your pet's oral hygiene affects his overall health, and is so important to ensure a positive quality of life.



# GETTING IN THE HABIT OF BRUSHING YOUR PET'S TEETH

Brush your pet's teeth when she's calm and relaxed. Set a routine.

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. Gradually offer toothpaste on your finger so they get used to the consistency. Gently rub their teeth in a circular motion. Next, let them lick it off the brush. When your pet accepts this activity, she's ready for the real thing. Praise and reassure your pet throughout the process.

Brush the outsides of the teeth only; cats and dogs can lick tartar off the insides on their own. Placing the bristles where the teeth and gums meet, and at a 45-degree angle, brush in an oval

Working up to brushing daily is ideal. But if her mouth is healthy, even three days a week can make a difference. Without brushing, plaque can build up, putting your pet at risk for bad breath, gum disease, and tooth decay. It can also cause painful infection. Severe infection can spread, causing life-threatening conditions.



*Gradually introduce toothpaste on your finger and gently rub in a circular motion.*



*Place bristles at gum line, and at a 45-degree angle. Brush in an oval pattern.*



*Cover three to four teeth at a time and use ten short back-and-forth motions.*

The best preventive step for pets is the same as it is for people: brush regularly. In their case, of course, they need some help.

## Gather your tools

Before you begin your brushing routine, you'll need the right stuff on hand: a special pet toothbrush and special pet toothpaste. Don't use human toothpaste; they'll swallow it and get an upset stomach. They'll like their own paste, however; it comes in flavors like chicken and tuna. As with any training, the trick is to start early, proceed slowly, and keep sessions short and positive.

Gauge your pet's anxiety level. If she seems upset, stop, and try again later. You may need to work on mastering each of the following steps over time.

pattern, getting into the area around the base of each tooth as well as between the teeth. Cover three to four teeth at a time and use ten short back-and-forth motions before moving along. While you're brushing, watch for any signs of reddened gums or tooth fractures, each of which could be a prelude to a more serious problem.

When you're finished brushing your pet's teeth, reward her with her favorite treat or extra attention. Always stop when everyone's still having fun. Also remember that good dental care doesn't end with brushing. Certain chews and treats can also help you fight plaque buildup. And don't forget to schedule regular professional dental cleanings. Talk with your vet about how often is right for your pet. 🐾

START EARLY AND OFTEN

## Oral exams and cleanings

Puppies and kittens are born without teeth. That's the good news. Six to eight weeks later they'll develop a full set of baby teeth – and a potential set of problems.

The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) recommends that veterinary dental care begin at this early stage, evaluating puppies and kittens for issues related to healthy oral development.

During a routine examination, which can be performed while patients are awake, your veterinarian will look for developmental anomalies, the accumulation of plaque and tartar, periodontal disease, and oral tumors. A more thorough examination, including dental cleaning, requires a short-lasting anesthetic and should be performed at least annually once your pet reaches adulthood. The teeth should be professionally cleaned, scaled, and polished to remove all plaque and calculus. Many veterinarians now use ultrasonic dental units, similar to the ones used on people, for cleaning your pets' teeth. 🐾

## 5 SIMPLE WAYS TO Help our pets and save our planet

1. Cut down on waste that takes space and switch to biodegradable poop bags. The bags decompose in about the same amount of time as an apple.
2. Overpopulation, and consequently euthanization, is the #1 killer of dogs in this country. Visit your local shelter and adopt, or volunteer with a rescue group to help as many dogs in need find great forever homes.
3. Old blankets and sheets may seem like junk to you, but to the dogs at your local shelter, they are beds and comfort. Instead of trashing your old linens and towels, donate them to your local shelter.
4. Old socks with missing pairs? Make a dog toy out of it! Recycling household products and making dog toys is a great way to re-use, rather than consume.
5. Instead of driving to the dog park, how about rollerblading, biking, or just walking instead? It's more exercise and time for you and your dog to spend together, and it's not using fossil fuels or spewing greenhouse gases into the air. 🐾

# The Complete Pet Wellness Exam

## Dearborn Family Pet Care

recommends that healthy dogs and cats visit the veterinarian twice a year for a complete exam and laboratory testing. For senior petizens, the frequency of wellness exams should be determined on an individual basis, taking into account the pet's species, breed and environment.

During a wellness exam, your pet will be examined from head to tail to evaluate your pet's general health and help keep him in tip-top shape.

## VITAL STATISTICS

Your pet's temperature, pulse, respiration rate and body weight will be recorded. Your veterinarian can help you develop an appropri-

ate diet and exercise plan.

## EARS

Your pet's ears will be thoroughly examined. Ear canals protect the inner ear, but can also become a home for parasites and other foreign objects.

## EYES

Eye examinations—including observation of the inner structures and outward appearances—often reveal many health issues, including anemia, infections, glaucoma, cataracts, high blood pressure, jaundice, kidney problems and allergies, in addition to eye injuries and ulcers.

## MOUTH

Inspect your pet's gums, teeth, tongue and palate for tartar buildup, dental abnormalities, fractures, loose teeth, tumors, infection and other problems. Your veterinarian will discuss the importance of regular at-home and professional teeth cleaning to prevent periodontal disease, which can cause bad breath and tooth loss.

## HEART AND LUNGS

A stethoscope is used to listen to your pet's heart and lungs for early signs of heart and respiratory disease.

## REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS

If your pet has not been spayed or neutered, your veterinarian may discuss the many health benefits beyond just birth control. Your pet's reproductive system will be checked for swellings, discharges and lumps.

## SKIN

Your pet's skin and coat is a good gauge of overall health, and will be checked for fleas, ticks, other external parasites, tumors and wounds, as well as signs of allergies and infection.

## HEAD TO TOE TO TAIL

Your pet's abdomen will be checked for abnormalities to detect problems with the stomach, intestines, kidneys, liver and other organs. They'll also examine your pet's legs and feet, and the condition of your pet's joints, muscles, lymph nodes and nose.

## LABORATORY TESTING

During your pet's wellness exam, your veterinarian may recommend additional testing, using a sample of blood, urine, skin, hair or feces. When your pet is healthy, laboratory tests establish your pet's "baseline" values. Then, if your pet ever gets sick, current results are

compared to baseline values to determine any abnormalities, confirm the presence of certain illnesses and rule out other diseases.

## VACCINATIONS

Vaccinations are one of the most important preventive measures you can take for the health of your pet. Dogs can be immunized against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus, Bordetella, rabies, and Lyme disease. Cats can be immunized against feline panleukopenia (distemper), rabies, feline rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia and feline leukemia.

Help your pet start the new year on the right paw with a complete wellness exam. You'll enjoy some peace of mind and your pet will enjoy a happier, healthier life.



WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO PREVENT IT

## Periodontitis in Dogs & Cats

Periodontal disease in cats and dogs is one of the most common infectious diseases in the world. It occurs in two forms: gingivitis, a reversible inflammation of the gums; and periodontitis, an inflammation of the deeper structures supporting the teeth. Periodontitis causes tooth and bone loss, which can even lead to jaw fracture, and affects over 80 percent of dogs and cats over three years of age.

Periodontitis is the inflammation of the structures that support teeth, the gum tissue, periodontal ligament, alveolus (small cavity) and cementum (bonelike connective tissue covering the root of a tooth and assisting in tooth support).

### WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Bad breath**
- **Bleeding gums**
- **Tooth loss or loose teeth**
- **Ulcers in the mouth**
- **Gum recession**
- **Poor appetite**

### HOME CARE AND PREVENTION

The basic principle is that active periodontal disease will not develop around a clean tooth. Daily tooth brushing is the single most important home care act that you can do. Dental care diets or treats can also be helpful

to maintain a healthy mouth. Chlorhexidine rinses or toothpastes are excellent at killing plaque above the gum line and should be used daily in chronic or refractory cases.

Periodontal lesions can be progressive so it is important they are monitored closely. Follow up with your veterinarian as directed (often every 3-6 months) for re-evaluation.

Again, daily tooth brushing using a pet dental product is the most important thing you can do to prevent periodontal disease. In addition, regular dental examinations by your veterinarian are very important. Remember, prevention *IS* the best medicine.





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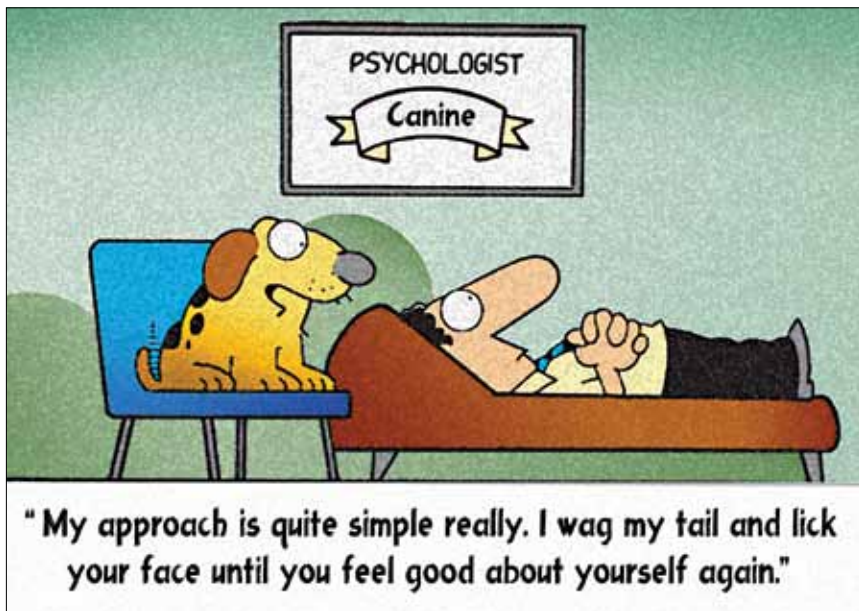
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**"My approach is quite simple really. I wag my tail and lick your face until you feel good about yourself again."**



## Ask Your Paw

**Dear Paw,**  
**Why does my cat compulsively scratch, lick, and even chew on himself?**

**- Chewed Out**

Most cats are meticulous groomers, but what happens when the behavior goes into overdrive? For a variety of reasons, some cat licking, scratching, and chewing behaviors become compulsive, which can annoy you and damage your pet's skin and coat.

If your cat is scratching, licking, or chewing herself compulsively, it is likely you regularly catch her in the act. Cats with self-mutilating behaviors may also cause red, irritated areas called hot spots to form, but they are less likely than dogs to do so.

Although compulsive scratching,

licking, or chewing behaviors can develop in any animal, female cats are more likely than males to lick, chew, or pull on their fur.

Some of the possible reasons for this behavior are parasites, allergies, dry skin, pain, boredom, anxiety or compulsive disorder.

Because there are a number of medical problems that may result in scratching and licking behaviors, be sure to consult with your veterinarian to help determine the cause and the best course of action.

*- Your Paw*