



River Heights
Veterinary Hospital

A PET-LOVING PUBLICATION FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT RIVER HEIGHTS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

the PAW

PETS ARE WONDERFUL

Celebrating National Pet Dental Health Month.

We are proud to offer this very special issue of The Paw concerning a very important part of your pet's health: the care and maintenance of their mouth, teeth and gums. Inside you'll find information on Home Brushing, Food Choices, Dental Cleanings, Gum Disease and Oral Examinations, as well as money-saving coupons that really make cents.

And...

Don't Forget to Enter Our Pet Photo Contest!

I'm gonna get my picture on the cover!

Last Chance to Enter:

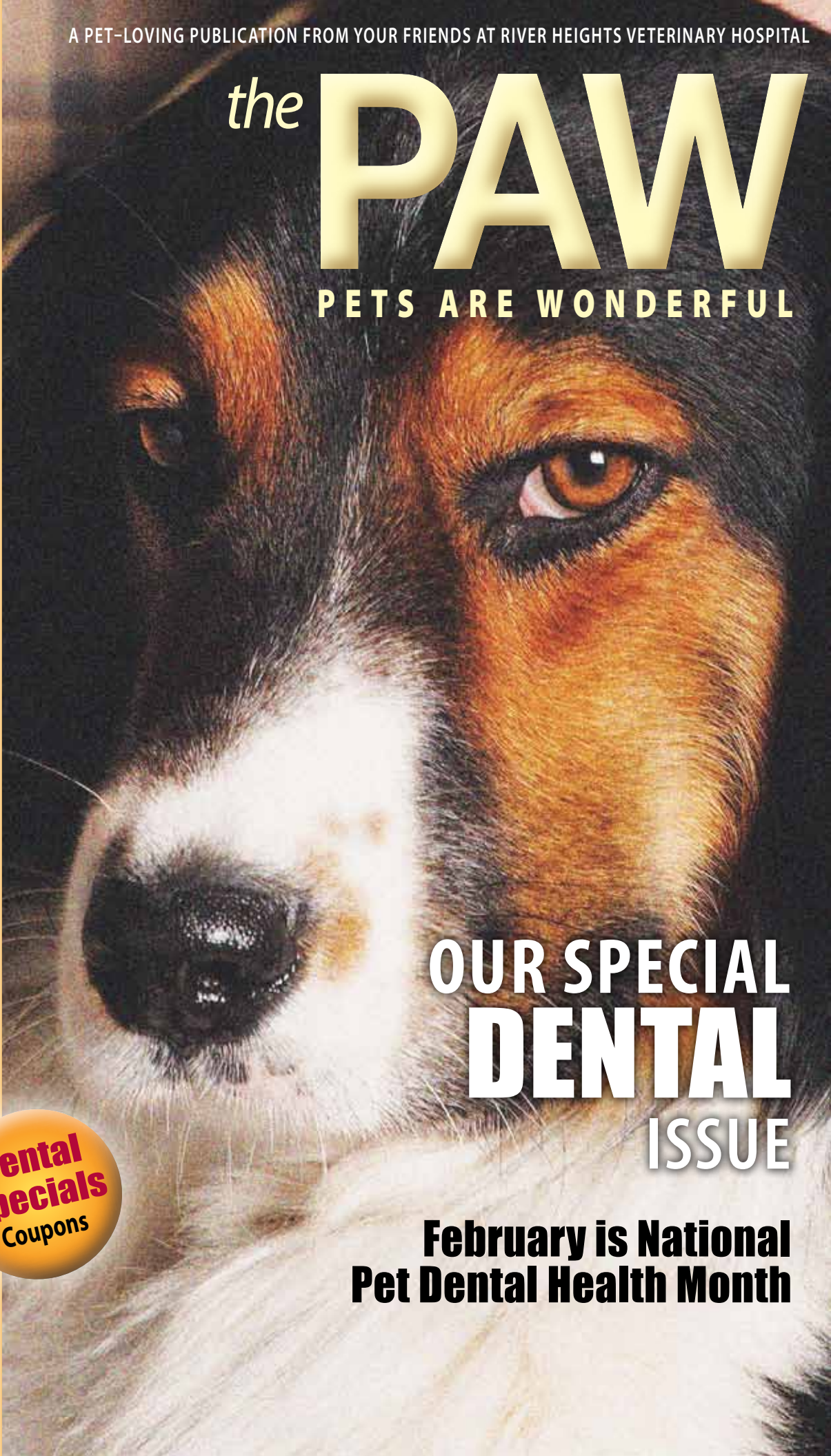
February 14

See back for details

**Dental
Specials
Coupons**

OUR SPECIAL DENTAL ISSUE

February is National Pet Dental Health Month



CHEW ON THIS

Let's Talk Teeth



You probably think that your dog or cat is one in a million. They would gladly settle for an owner who's merely one in ten, because only one in ten owners takes proper care of their pet's teeth.



It's National Pet Dental Health Month

February is National Pet Dental Health Month, an appropriate time to call attention to this vital area of year-round pet owner responsibility. Four out of five cats and dogs over the age of three will be affected by periodontal disease. In fact, oral disease is the number one health problem diagnosed in small animals.

Four Steps in the Right Direction

River Heights Veterinary Hospital recommends 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.

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 CHECK-UPS

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.

Chew on this for awhile and keep your pet on the winning - and grinning - side.



VETERINARIAN DENTAL CARE

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 done at least annually once your pet reaches adulthood.

In addition, AAHA recommends the following:

❖ **Pre-anesthetic exam.** This will make sure your pet is healthy enough to undergo anesthesia. Blood, urine, electrocardiograph and X-ray tests may also be conducted to check for any dangerous heart, kidney or other conditions.

❖ **Anesthesia monitoring.** The monitoring and recording of your pet's vital signs is important to help ensure her safety while under anesthesia.

❖ **Dental X-rays.** Radiographs (X-rays) help detect abnormalities that cannot be found by examination alone. In some cases, X-rays can confirm the need for extraction of teeth that are loose or badly infected.

❖ **Scaling and polishing.** Veterinarians use similar instruments as the ones human dentists use to remove plaque and calculus from your pet's teeth. A special polishing paste smooths out scratches in the tooth enamel.

❖ **Fluoride/sealants.** The application of an anti-plaque substance, such as a fluoride treatment and/or a barrier sealant, can help strengthen and desensitize teeth as well as decrease future plaque.

IT'S EASIER THAN YOU MAY THINK

Brushing Your Pet's Pearly Whites

YUK! Imagine what your teeth would be like if you didn't brush them for a year. Talk about bad breath! And disease! On second thought, don't.

Now consider that your pet can't brush his own teeth. And *MAYBE* you take him to the vet for a dental cleaning once a year.

GET THE IDEA?

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.



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.

Before even asking your unsuspecting pet to open wide, 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.

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, he'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 in-

sides on their own. Placing the bristles where the teeth and gums meet, and at a 45-degree angle, brush in an oval 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.

The two of you may find that you've

begun a form of bonding to which you'll both look forward.

February is National Pet Dental Health Month, a great reminder that dental health is more than just teeth; your pet's oral hygiene affects his overall health. Diseases of the mouth can often be painful and can contribute to additional problems. Regular dental checkups and cleanings are so important to ensure a positive quality of life – something your pet depends entirely on you to provide.

PAW-FACT

Only one in ten owners takes proper care of their pet's teeth.

PREVENTING

Gum Disease

Worst case scenario: bad breath in humans won't get you a date for the prom. In your pet, however, it could be indicative of a serious oral problem, and the sooner you have it treated by your veterinarian, the sooner you and your pet can both smile proudly.

Periodontal disease is a progressive infection of the tissue surrounding the teeth. It starts out as a bacterial film called plaque. When the bacteria die, they can be calcified by calcium in saliva. This forms a hard, rough substance called tartar or calculus, which allows more plaque to accumulate. Initially, plaque is soft; brushing or chewing hard food and toys can dislodge it. If left to spread, plaque can lead to gingivitis, an inflammation of the gums, causing them to become red and swollen and bleed easily.

As plaque and calculus develop below the gum line, professional cleaning will be needed to help manage it. If the plaque and tartar buildup continues unchecked, infection can form around the root of the tooth. In the final stages of periodontal disease, the tissues surrounding the tooth are destroyed, the bony socket holding the tooth erodes and the tooth becomes loose.

Oral disease is a very painful process for your four-legged friend. But with home and professional care, it can be averted before it even starts.

Ideally, dogs and cats should have their teeth brushed daily. For those of us who have attempted to do so, however, we know this is much easier said than done (see other story on this page). So it's generally recommended that you have your pet's teeth checked by your veterinarian once or twice a year, depending on their age, breed, diet and lifestyle. At these visits, discuss some sort of manageable home dental care program with your vet.

There are special diets, treats and other aids that can substitute for actual brushing. And in the long run – as well as in your pet's mouth – something really is better than nothing.



River Heights Veterinary Hospital

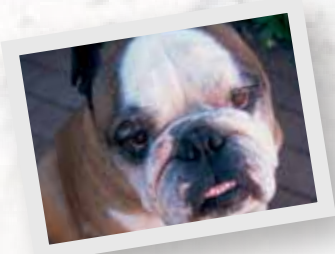
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**Last Chance to Enter
PET PHOTO
CONTEST**
**Get your pet on the
cover of The Paw!**

**Contest deadline:
February 14, 2011**

Email entries to:

pawcasso@pawstreet.com

All entries must include your veterinarian's
business name, your pet's name and your name.
Photos must be jpeg format.



"Man, those chase scenes were great!"



RIVER HEIGHTS IS NOW ON FACEBOOK!
facebook.com/riverheightsvet

Dental Month Specials February & March



River Heights
Veterinary Hospital

Canine Dental Special

FREE 15Lb. Bag
of Hills Prescription T/D Diet

With Dental cleaning during the months of
February and March (\$37.89 value)



River Heights
Veterinary Hospital

Feline Dental Special

FREE 4Lb. Bag
of Hills Prescription T/D Diet

With Dental cleaning during the months of
February and March (\$15.69 value)