

The Importance of Your Pet's Dental Care

Good dental care plays a critical role in the quality of your pet's life. Dental disease and its secondary problems can be treated, and even more importantly, prevented through adequate at home care and timely professional dental health care. As one of the most common medical problems seen in pets, untreated oral disease causes pain and tooth loss. Dental disease can also contribute to chronic heart and kidney disease. This is why it is extremely important for you as a responsible pet owner to be able to identify the signs of poor dental health.

The following are ten common signs of a dental problem:

1. Bad Breath
2. Loose or missing teeth
3. Red, swollen, irritated, or bleeding gums
4. Loss of appetite and weight loss
5. Visible dental tartar on teeth
6. Difficulty eating
7. Drooling or excessive salivation
8. Staining of teeth
9. Nasal discharge
10. Loss of vitality

If your pet is experiencing any of the preceding signs it is extremely important that you schedule an appointment with your veterinarian for a complete exam, dental assessment, and treatment as soon as possible.

An annual dental exam and cleaning is highly recommended after your pet has reached one year of age. This consists of a thorough exam of the entire mouth, removal of plaque and tartar both above and below the gum line, and polishing of the crowns of all of the teeth. It is also important to follow a good home care program, which can extend the positive effects of the dental cleaning. Home care can consist of brushing your pet's teeth and special dental diets. Daily brushing is an ideal way to maintain oral health between annual professional dental cleanings.

February is **National Pet Dental Health Month** and the ideal time to schedule your loyal friend's dental exam and cleaning with your veterinarian.

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