

BRUSHING YOUR PETS TEETH

Tooth brushing is the single most effective means of removing plaque from the visible surface of the tooth. Even after a professional dental cleaning, plaque bacteria can begin to grow on a clean tooth after 24-36 hours. The goal of dental home care is to remove plaque and to slow down tartar accumulation on the tooth surface. When you brush your pet's teeth there are 3 things to remember:

1. Make the brushing experience a positive one. Reward your pet while brushing with praise and treats afterwards.
2. Be patient and take it slow. It is key to introduce tooth brushing in small steps so that your pet doesn't get overwhelmed and upset.
3. Each step of this desensitization process will often need to be repeated over and over again to achieve the best results so be persistent.

Step 1 - Before using a brush or paste, teach your dog or cat that tooth brushing can be fun by first getting him or her used to having your fingers in his or her mouth. Dip your finger into something your pet likes, such as chicken broth, tuna fish or peanut butter. Let your pet lick your finger. When your pet becomes accustomed to this routine, you can then gently slide your finger in under the lip. Hold your pet's mouth closed and rub your finger against the outside surface of his or her teeth and gums. Repeat this exercise daily for a few days.

Step 2 - Next you can try introducing the pet toothpaste on your finger so he or she gets used to its smell and taste. Pet toothpastes are designed to be swallowed, taste good to pets and contain enzymes or antiseptics that help control plaque. Do not use human toothpaste, it contains fluoride which should not be swallowed. If your pet is not interested in the toothpaste, brush the teeth without it. The mechanical action of the toothbrush is the main factor in removing plaque.

Step 3 - When your pet is tolerating your finger, try the same process patiently with a pet toothbrush or a children's toothbrush. Dipping the toothbrush in chicken broth, etc., till your pet begins to associate the toothbrush with positive feelings and then slowly introduce it into his or her mouth.

Step 4 - Concentrate on brushing the outside of the upper and lower teeth and don't worry about the inside surfaces that contact the tongue. A back and forth circular motion for 30-60 seconds each side should be adequate if done daily (that's right—DAILY!) We recommend holding your pet's mouth closed with one hand around their muzzle and with the other hand slide the brush under the lips and brush the teeth.

