

# The Bark & Mew

Information & Updates from Falconbridge Animal Hospital & Village Veterinary Hospital  
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*Hooray for healthy teeth! From pethealthnetwork.com*

## February is Dental Month!

If we have recommended that your pet come in for a dental cleaning, now's the time to book your appointment! We will be offering a \$30 discount on all dentals performed during the month of February.

### What does a dental cleaning entail?

Unlike humans, we can't just ask your dog to open up and say "Ah!" To perform a thorough cleaning, we must place your pet under general anesthesia. Each pet is given a physical exam the morning of the procedure. We also run bloodwork on every pet prior to anesthesia to ensure that their bodies are healthy enough to handle it. Your pet's vital signs are monitored and IV fluids are given for the duration of their time under anesthesia.

A routine dental cleaning involves scaling and polishing your pet's teeth, removing plaque and tartar buildup. If your pet has any teeth that are broken or decayed, we will remove them. Some damaged teeth can be removed easily, and others are more difficult to extract. When extractions are needed, we may administer pain medications to your pet and send you home with more pain medications and antibiotics for them.

### Canine Dental Problems

A healthy adult dog has 42 teeth. According to Ernie Ward, DVM of Pet Health Network, both large and small breed dogs can develop oral and periodontal problems. "In small dogs with short snouts," he says, "we tend to see more issues with plaque, tartar, and dental calculus buildup." This can

lead to gum disease and loose, painful teeth. Small dogs are also more likely to break their tiny teeth on hard toys or chews. In larger breeds, we tend to see more traumatic injuries to the teeth and gums, such as broken teeth and jaws and worn teeth. If a tooth is worn down enough, the tooth root is exposed, which can be extremely painful and can cause the tooth to decay. Large dogs also develop plaque and tartar buildup.

### Feline Dental Problems

When we talk about feline dental health, we have to mention feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions, or FORLs. Resorptive lesions are very common and very painful. We don't know what causes them, but we do know that teeth affected by this disease erode from the inside out. The best treatment for resorptive lesions is to extract the affected teeth.

Another oral condition in cats is called stomatitis. This very painful, immune-mediated disorder is categorized by red, swollen gums and can also be accompanied by excessive salivation, weight loss, and trouble swallowing. Treatment for this disease can vary widely, and any of our doctors here will be happy to work with you to decide the best course of action if your kitty has been diagnosed with stomatitis.



*A before and after look at a canine dental cleaning.*

## Oral Cancer in Cats and Dogs

Unfortunately, many oral tumors are diagnosed in both cats and dogs. If malignant, they can be very aggressive and spread quickly throughout the body if left untreated. If you notice any lumps, swelling, or abnormal discoloration in your pet's mouth, have one of our doctors examine it as soon as possible.



### At-Home Dental Care

No at-home method can work as a substitute for regular professional dental cleanings for your pet, but there are ways you can combat tartar at home, potentially reducing the frequency with which your pet requires cleanings.

### Brushing Your Pet's Teeth

We have several tips for making the tooth brushing experience as pleasant as possible for both you and your pet!

- Always use a toothpaste that is made specifically for cats or dogs. Fluoride in human toothpaste will irritate your pet's stomach.
- Use either a toothbrush designed for pets or a soft child's toothbrush. You can also try using a Q-tip if your pet is more likely to allow that.
- If possible, start brushing your pet's teeth while he/she is still young! Starting early will get them used to the process and you'll be less likely to encounter resistance in the future.
- To get your pet used to brushing, wrap your finger in a washcloth or gauze and use it on his/her teeth like a toothbrush- rub all the teeth, front and back, from the gumline to the tip of the tooth. Continue this for a week or two, or until your pet seems more comfortable with the process.
- For the next week or so, brush with a soft toothbrush and water, but no toothpaste.

- Let your pet taste the toothpaste before putting it onto the toothbrush to allow him/her to

become familiar with it. Gradually work up to using a small amount on the toothbrush.

- Brush the front teeth first, and then work back to the larger teeth in the back. Move the toothbrush in an oval direction while brushing. Be sure to scrub in the crevice where the gums meet the teeth, because this is where odor and infection begin.
- Only worry about brushing the outsides of the teeth, as this is mostly where we see dental disease. Your pet will also be more likely to tolerate brushing the outsides of the teeth than the insides.

### Other Types of Dental Care

Products such as dental chews, dental diets, water additives, and oral rinses exist to help those pets that will not tolerate tooth-brushing. Some of these products contain an enzyme that is designed to break down tartar and dental calculus. Ask us for more information if you're interested in any of these products.



*Another before and after look at a dental cleaning.*