

## Welcome

February is "Pet Dental Health Month", so in this newsletter we will be giving some tips on keeping your pet's teeth and gums healthy and why this is important to your pet's overall health. If you have any questions or have a topic you would like to hear about please contact our staff at 630-365-9599 or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net



## What does a healthy mouth look like?

Before you learn how to take care of your dog or cat's teeth, you need to know what a healthy mouth looks like in the first place. Healthy teeth should be free of plaque and tartar (hard, scaly discolorations). Your pet's teeth should be intact and not broken (dogs have 42, cats have 30).

Your pet's tongue should be moist, without any lumps or cuts. And the gums should be pink. Some dog breeds have black or black & pink gums. Make sure you know what your pet's mouth usually looks like, and talk to your vet if you see any lumps, raised spots, pale gums or bright red tissue.

Following are some common oral care

problems your pet may suffer from, and when you should contact your vet:

\*Halitosis - Bad breath may be the first sign of a problem with your pet's oral health. Halitosis (bad breath), occurs when bacteria from food gets stuck in your pet's mouth. An infection may also be the cause. If your pet's breath is a bit stinky, start by brushing the teeth more frequently. Halitosis can usually be treated by regular brushing, but if it's coming from something more serious, like an infection or even kidney disease, you will need to contact your vet.

\*Cysts and tumors - Have you noticed any lumps in your pet's mouth? If so, make an appointment to get him examined right away. Some cysts may need to be drained by your vet, and lumps should be biopsied and removed to see if they are malignant.

\*Gingivitis - Inflamed gums caused by heavy plaque on your pet's teeth are often a sign of gingivitis. With regular cleaning, this condition is reversible. Start by getting serious with brushing your pet's teeth daily. If you notice any bleeding or changes in gum color, contact your vet.

\*Periodontal disease - Periodontal disease is an infection between the teeth and the gums that can cause swelling, loose teeth, pain, difficulty eating, or even nasal discharge (people can develop it by not brushing (too)). Look for signs like yellow or brown teeth, red or swollen gums and difficulty chewing. If your pet shows any of these or other signs of loose teeth or mouth pain, take him to your vet. Your vet will examine your pet to look for signs of infection, and your pet may need to be put on a treatment plan.

\*Proliferating gum disease - A condition that's often associated with bull terriers

and boxers, proliferating gum disease occurs when a dog's gum line grows over the teeth. This excess growth leads to more opportunity for infection, and should be treated with antibiotics and is often resected when doing a dental cleaning.



### **How to keep your pet's mouth clean**

Brush teeth – first you have to start out slowly. You need to get your pet comfortable with you touching his mouth and teeth before you come at him with a toothbrush. First you can start with rubbing your finger along his teeth and gums with a little pet toothpaste on your finger. Once he is comfortable with this you can put some toothpaste on a gauze square and gently rub his teeth and gums with this. You can slowly move up to introducing the toothbrush. Make sure to concentrate on getting the teeth in the far back, as these are generally the ones developing more plaque. You can buy the toothpaste at a pet supply store along with a toothbrush, or you

can use a child's size toothbrush, and make sure it has soft bristles.. Many pets will actually let their owners use a spin tooth brush; these can be quick and quite easy. Never use human toothpaste; these can make your pet sick.

There are also water additives, dental chews, etc. that can help keep your pet's teeth and mouth healthy.

Dental disease can lead to problems with your pet's internal organs, such as the heart. Caring for your pet's teeth can prevent other medical problems, saving you lots of money over the long term.

Studies show that 70% to 80% of dogs and cats have dental disease of some kind by the age of 3!

Pets that don't get routine dental care can lose their teeth, this can be painful and cause serious problems.

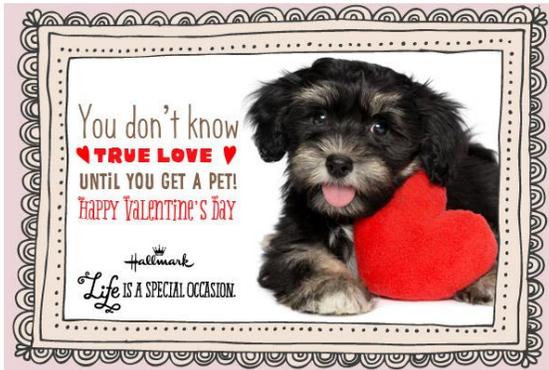
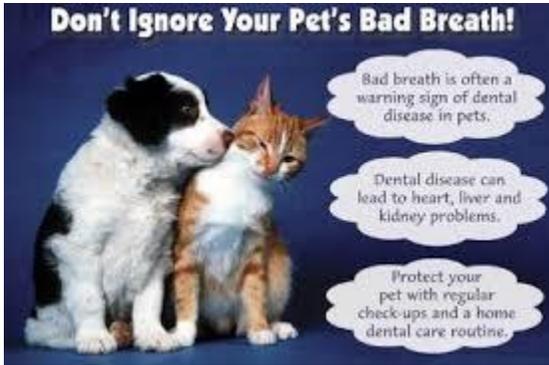
Our pets are very good at hiding pain, you may not know of a serious dental problem until it's very advanced. This is yet another reason to take your pet in for regular dental checkups!

If you just cannot brush your pet's teeth, your veterinarian may have to do regular dental cleanings, which require your pet to be put under anesthesia. Some pets may need to have this done as frequently as two to three times every year.

If you start your pet early, as a kitten or puppy, hopefully you will be able to brush their teeth as a daily part of their routine! Even an older animal can learn to tolerate having their teeth brushed. You can teach an old dog

new tricks!

## HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



If you have any questions or comments, please email us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net) or call 630-365-9599! If you have a subject you would like covered in our newsletter please let us know!