

How to Brush Your Pet's Teeth

Veterinary Dentistry and Oral Surgery of Rhode Island

Client and Patient Education Sheet

Brushing Benefits:

Brushing your pet's teeth is one of the most effective home care plaque control methods. Ideally, tooth brushing should be introduced before the establishment of periodontal disease. Brushing at least every other day is effective in preventing and controlling gingivitis.

Some studies have linked that dental disease can travel throughout the body using the patient's blood stream. Reducing plaque buildup may reduce the risk of heart disease, kidney problems, liver disease, and organ failure.

A tooth brush can come in many shapes and sizes. Make sure to get the correct size for your pet.



Training Tips:

The first hurdle of brushing your pet's teeth is getting them to tolerate the tooth brush. Here are some steps to help simplify the process of training your pet to allow you to brush their teeth!

As with any training method, it is important to go slow and easy. Try to make the experience rewarding and fun for your pet. Do not move on to the next step until your pet has been fully acclimated to the previous step, it is okay if this process takes a few days or weeks.

A reward can be a treat, some play time, a walk, or anything else that your pet enjoys!



Step 1: Find the right tools (See our VOHC Handout for recommendations)

Step 2: Let your pet taste test the tooth paste. Give a reward after each taste test. You can use your finger to put some on the patient's lip if they do not willingly taste it.

Step 3: Using just your finger, feel lightly around your pet's mouth and teeth. Initially, give a reward after a few seconds of touch. Then increase the time as you go.

Step 4: Introduce the tooth brush to just the front teeth. Initially, give a reward after a few seconds of light brushing. Then increase the time as you go.

Step 5: Use the tooth brush to work your way to the back teeth. Initially, give a reward after a few seconds of light brushing. Then increase the time as you go.

Step 6: Do all of the steps together, and then slowly reduce the rewards until you only provide one reward at the end of the brushing.

If your pet loves a dental treat or chew, this might be a good time to use them

Things To Be Cautious Of:

Use caution when first beginning to brush your pet's teeth. Certain patients may react poorly to brushing as it can be painful when disease has already developed. A painful mouth can cause a patient to become averse to brushing. Consistency over time and proper introduction to brushing will help to reduce this pain. If your pet has mobile teeth or seems to have painful teeth, it may be better to consult a veterinary dentist before beginning brushing.