

Time for a Fall Clean-up of Your Pet's Mouth



50 years ago dogs rarely got tooth or gum disease except due to the odd traumatic injury or accident, and I'm positive none of the dogs I knew as a child had ever met a dental hygienist. Why then, these days, are we persuaded to take our dogs and cats to the vet to get their teeth cleaned every three months? Does ANY animal submit to this? No they don't! Which is why they must be sedated under general anesthetic to get it done. Surely there is a better way to care for their oral health?

A Primer on Mouth Health

Humans, dogs and cats have different numbers and shapes of teeth, but otherwise physiologically they are the same. When it happens, tooth and gum decay affects us all similarly, in a cascade of periodontal conditions:

Plaque: a filmy slime made of bacteria and saliva; it covers the teeth and can be easily brushed away. Plaque is alive—it thrives on sugar, and the bacteria are constantly producing acid, which, if not removed, wears down tooth enamel to create dental cavities (also known as caries). If plaque remains long at the gum line it can turn solid and becomes

Tartar (also called Calculus): a hard yellow crust formed from mineral salts and plaque that tends to gather at the gum line, irritating gum (gingival) tissue. It cannot be brushed off but will chip off if you scrape it with your thumbnail. Left on the teeth it leads to....

Gingivitis: redness and swelling of the gums. It hurts, and it weakens the gums so teeth can become loose and thus more vulnerable to damage and decay in between them. If neglected, gingivitis turns into the more serious condition....

Periodontitis: progressive infection and inflammation that will destroy the periodontal ligaments that hold teeth in place in the gums. Ultimately it causes bone loss and can lead to chronic systemic infection throughout the body. Healthy teeth are white or slightly yellow, and healthy gums are smooth and light pink (except those in breeds with naturally pigmented gums such as Chows and Sharpeis). There should not

be any redness or swelling, and your animal should not wince in pain when you open her mouth for a look (and a sniff). The breath should not be horrible as this is a sign of bacteria necrotizing (destroying) the gum tissue.



Modern Diet

Plaque will always form on teeth after meals. The question is will it be dissolved by the mouth's normal salivary process or will it overwhelm the body's natural response and literally stick around to cause trouble?

Before the advent of commercial pet foods in the early 20th century, a domesticated dog ate a primarily meat-based diet of table scraps, farm scraps, and whatever small animal it could catch while foraging on the property. Cancer, dysplasia, diabetes and other modern illnesses were unheard of.

Today, most dogs and cats are fed a life-long diet of artificial, heavily processed food containing synthetic vitamins, minerals and other chemical additives. The connection between a carbohydrate-heavy, processed food diet and a host of chronic illnesses in both dogs and humans is no longer disputable, and may arguably be the leading cause of poor oral health.

Teeth covered in plaque are teeming with bacteria, which gets into the gums and can provoke a systemic inflammatory response in the animal. This means that periodontal disease causes not only bad breath, rotten teeth and sore gums, but can also damage major organs including the liver, lungs and kidneys, the skin and the joints, even the heart and immune system. External signs of this include poor skin and coat condition, smelly stools, and lethargy. All from plaque buildup on the teeth! No amount of costly dental cleanings, toothpaste, crunchy biscuits or chew toys alleviates the cause of the problem. Plaque must be prevented from building up in the first place.

Real Meat, Whole Food & Fat-soluble Vitamins

To prevent that cascade of periodontal disease, more research recommends a diet that includes WHOLE foods. When she was writing her groundbreaking books on natural rearing in the 1940's, Juliette de Bairicli-Levy recommended that dog owners bury fresh goat heads in shallow soil. After a few weeks of letting them get good and ripe, she advised to allow the dogs to sniff them out, dig them up and eat them. Today that would likely upset your neighbors! Instead, preparing homemade diets with raw meats supplemented with Flora4, or carefully selecting a synthetic-free, minimally processed commercial food made with only actual food ingredients is a more popular idea.

According to research done by the Weston A. Price foundation, there are 3 important food factors for creating and preserving perfectly strong teeth and healthy gums:

Price noted that aboriginal people who came into Western society with perfect teeth soon lost them from eating a western diet lacking in the 3 food factors above. This may logically be applied to pets as well, as we have watched for 100 years the increasingly obvious correlation between the advent of modern processed pet food diets and increased chronic disease, including tooth and gum decay in modern domesticated animals.

Price also documented that the absence of the fat-soluble vitamins A, E, D and K, the ones found in abundance in the three food groups above, made humans more susceptible to rotting teeth and gum disease. These vitamins are stored in the liver and fatty tissue and we now know that vitamins A and D cooperate together to regulate the production of certain vitamin K-dependent proteins. Once vitamin K activates these proteins, Vitamins A and D help mineralize bones and teeth and help prevent infection and protect against cell death. Price asserted that to have healthy teeth, one doesn't need to eat a lot from each of the three groups above, just regularly from at least 2 of them. This certainly fits with Juliette's advice to feed raw animal organs for a vibrantly healthy pet. Furthermore, since plaque survives in an acid environment, the recommendations of both Price and Juliette make sense because feeding raw or whole food shifts the body terrain toward a more alkaline state, making the mouth a less hospitable host for acid-loving bacteria.

The Last Word on Bad Breath

Rotten Teeth's first cousin, Stinky Breath, has a similarly systemic cause either in the mouth or the gut. Your only hope is to improve the oral health of your dog with a natural diet and some regular servings of probiotic-rich Flora4 Ground Sprouted Seeds to shift the gut flora and fill in nutritional gaps. Cleaning up the teeth will freshen the breath!



Raw, grass fed dairy



organs of sea animals, including fish heads, eggs, oysters, clams, mussels, crab and lobster with their innards.



organs of land animals including liver, pancreas, bone marrow, tongue, heart, kidneys, eyes and stomach lining.

PROFILE | MARIA RINGO



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