



Veterinary Dentistry Specialists

Superior Service is our Standard of Care.



**AT-HOME
ORAL HEALTHCARE
FOR YOUR PETS**



ABOUT VETERINARY DENTISTRY SPECIALISTS

Just as regular wellness visits with your family veterinarian can help keep your pet healthy and prevent common medical issues from becoming more serious, regular dental care can do the same for their oral health. There may be times however, when your veterinarian refers your pet for advanced oral care...that's where we come in.

VDS is the first and only specialty practice where a board-certified veterinary dentist and a board-certified veterinary anesthesiologist participate in the care of each patient. Along with a team of professionals hired for their talent serving the needs of pet families and referring veterinarians, we aim to make it easier for pet owners to comply with oral health recommendations.

OUR ADVANCED SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Endodontics
- Extractions
- Jaw Fracture Repair
- Malocclusions
- Oral Cancer Surgery
- Orthodontics
- Palate Surgery
- Periodontics
- Prosthodontics & Restoratives
- Salivary Gland Surgery

Patients are seen by appointment. We welcome your call or email if you have any questions.

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WHY IS ORAL HEALTHCARE IMPORTANT?

- Periodontal disease (inflammation of the tissues surrounding and supporting the teeth) affects at least 80% of dogs and 70% of cats over three years of age.
- Plaque constantly accumulates on your pet's teeth. Over time, it mineralizes and becomes calculus (a hard brown material, also known as tartar). Plaque and calculus contain bacteria, which invade the space under the gumline, causing inflammation and then destruction of the tissues that support the tooth. Periodontal disease also causes pain. Inflamed tissues hurt, and progression of the disease results in bone loss and mobile teeth.



WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING FOR MY PET'S ORAL HEALTH?

- Periodontal disease is permanent once it has progressed from gingivitis (inflammation of the gum tissue) to attachment loss (recession of bone, gingiva, and ligament around teeth). Therefore, prevention is ideal. We recommend combining home care with annual professional dental cleanings.
- Home care can significantly improve your pet's overall health and comfort. The more you can do at home, the less your veterinarian will need to do!

TOOTH BRUSHING

- **Tooth brushing, daily or every other day**, is the best way to prevent periodontal disease. It helps to remove the bacteria that accumulate daily. If brushing is any less frequent than this, plaque accumulation cannot be adequately controlled. Without brushing, plaque begins to form within 24 hours after a professional dental cleaning, calculus within three days, and gingivitis within two weeks.
- Brushing is inexpensive, and once the routine has been established, it can be a rewarding part of the day for you and your pet. Another benefit of brushing is the early detection of problems such as fractured teeth and oral growths.
- A soft-bristled toothbrush is recommended. The use of veterinary toothpaste can reduce the accumulation of plaque and serve as positive reinforcement to your pet. This will require a little patience, but by going slowly and rewarding your pet, you can do it!
- When brushing, use a circular or back-and-forth motion. Apply gentle pressure and concentrate on the gumline, which is where plaque accumulates and does the most damage. **Do not use toothpaste made for humans.** They can harm your pet if swallowed and are not as effective.

OTHER PRODUCTS: DIETS, CHEWS, TREATS, AND WATER ADDITIVES

- Brushing is the best thing you can do for your pet's oral health at home. But other dental products can provide some benefits.
- The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) is an organization of veterinary dentists and dental scientists that reviews voluntary product submissions and associated scientific literature. When appropriate, it recognizes products such as dental diets, treats, rinses, and water additives that meet standards of plaque and tartar control. A list of dental diets and treats awarded the "VOHC Accepted" seal is available at www.vohc.org.

CHEW TOYS

- Chew toys can help prevent calculus formation, but many products on the market can harm teeth. There is no perfect chew toy for your pet. A good rule to follow is that dogs should never chew on anything harder than their teeth, since materials that are too hard may cause dental fractures. Toys made of rubber are good options. Supervision should be provided whenever your pet is given a chew toy. We recommend choosing chew toys for your pet that allow for an indentation with your fingernail.



TEACH YOUR PET TO ACCEPT TOOTH BRUSHING

Your objective is to brush all the surfaces of your pet's teeth once a day, using a soft-bristled toothbrush and veterinary toothpaste. You will not attain this objective overnight! But with patience and positive reinforcement, you can do it. Some behavior modification techniques are listed below. Stick with it, and make it a positive experience for you and your pet.

SELECT YOUR TRAINING TIME

- Pets respond to routine, so be consistent with your training time.
- Pick a time of day when your pet is likely to be hungry, and choose a quiet moment.

CHOOSE A REWARD

- Pick a reward that motivates your pet – a food they LOVE, or playtime with a favorite toy.
- If you are using food as a reward, be sure to have tiny pieces of it ready.

SET THE SURROUNDINGS AND KEEP IT POSITIVE

- A small dog may be most amenable to tooth brushing when sitting in your lap. A cat would probably be best next to you, on a large chair or the couch. A large dog should be asked to sit on the floor.
- Use a calm, gentle tone of voice. Maintain a positive attitude and demeanor – your pet will sense and respond to any anxiety on your part. If they think this is a fun game involving rewards, they will be eager to play.
- Be persistent, but have reasonable expectations about your rate of progress.



BEGIN BY HANDLING AND MANIPULATING YOUR PET'S MOUTH

- Start with a brief period of affectionate touching of the lips and nose. Give treats if they are staying calm.
- Begin trying to gently touch and manipulate their mouth. As long as they are quiet, responding to requests, and allowing that manipulation, they get IMMEDIATE rewards. If they resist in any way, take the treats away and end the session.
- Slowly progress from manipulating the lips to running your fingers along the teeth and gums. Once they are comfortable with your hands, try a gauze sponge wrapped around your finger or a Q-tip or makeup sponge.
- It will take several sessions to reach this point. Give rewards throughout, and end sessions whenever they resist.

INTRODUCE TOOTHPASTE

- Once your pet is comfortable with your fingers or a gauze sponge against their gums and teeth, add veterinary toothpaste or gel to the mix. Rub it along the gumline.
- If adding toothpaste makes matters more difficult, you can use warm water or a dental rinse on the brush instead.
- Keep up the praise and the rewards!

INTRODUCE THE TOOTHBRUSH

- The next step is to bring the toothbrush out. Touch it to their face, put it under the lips, and gently work it around their mouth so they can get used to the feel of the bristles.
- If they like the toothpaste, have them lick it off the brush.

START BRUSHING!

- Use your dominant hand to grasp over the muzzle to aid in lifting the lips.
- Use a circular or back-and-forth motion. Apply gentle pressure, focused on the gumline. Aim for 45 seconds on each side.
- Try to orient the toothbrush bristles at 45 degrees towards the gumline.
- Initially, concentrate on the outer surfaces of the teeth. Eventually, you can work up to brushing the inside surfaces as well.
- Ideally, brush once per day.
- Remember that patience is a virtue! Don't force the issue. Stay positive and don't forget to reward good behavior!

