

# TO YOUR *Pet's* Health

## BAD BREATH *Blues*

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Does your pet's breath take yours away? Bad breath is often an indication that your pet has some kind of dental disease going on.

Dental disease is a major and often overlooked health concern in pets. The plaque and eventual calculus buildup that forms on your pet's teeth harbors a lot of bacteria. These bacteria are part of the cause of plaque and can be a source of infection. One possible outcome is infection and damage to the valves of the heart which can lead to eventual heart disease. This constant source of infection is especially concerning in pets that have a suppressed immune system, like diabetes, auto-immune diseases, or animals that are on long term steroid therapy.

Another concern for pets is that dental disease can be a constant source of pain. It is painful to have an infection around a tooth or to have a fractured tooth. If you notice that your pet is pawing at its face, chewing on just one side of its mouth, there is blood evident after pet is done eating, or your pet is crying out when it tries to chew, these can be signs that your pet needs to have its teeth examined.

There are many factors that can cause a pet to be more prone to dental issues. One is crowding of the teeth. This is often seen in short

nosed and small breed dogs. These dogs often require dentals to start at an earlier age and to be done more often. A second factor is some pets simply do not like to chew. They either prefer wet food, or just have no desire to chew on any kind of dental chews. On the other hand, there are those pets that chew too much, which can cause teeth to become worn or fractured.

Your pet cannot brush its own teeth, so they depend on the shearing action of chewing to get the job done. If you have a pet that has teeth that do not align well or prefers not to chew on anything, they often will need help from you. Brushing is a great way to help remove plaque on a day to day basis. This is easiest when started at a young age, but not impossible in an older dog if you are persistent enough. It is especially important after a dental cleaning is performed to start a brushing routine, which can help extend the time until the next dental is needed.

February is Dental Health Awareness month and is a great time to become more aware of the importance of dental health. So, if your pet's breath is taking yours away, you notice that your pet has pain while trying to chew, or you notice blood or redness to your pet's gums, you should really have their teeth examined by your veterinarian.



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