

TO YOUR *Pet's* *Health*

BAD BREATH *Blues*

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Does your pet's breath take yours away? If it does, it shouldn't. Bad breath is often an indication that your pet has dental disease.

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 harbor a lot of bacteria. These bacteria are part of the cause of plaque and can be a source of infection. Besides causing infection and disease in your pet's mouth, it could also cause 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 your pet is done eating, or your pet is crying out when it is chewing, please take note. These are signs that your pet needs to have its teeth examined.

There are many factors that can cause your 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 toy or dental chew. This is not just a dog issue; many cats get dental disease for this reason as well.

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 pet 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.

There are many different dental chews commercially available. It is best to talk to your vet about which ones they recommend and how long your pet needs to be chewing on it to be effective.

February is Dental Health Awareness month and is a great time to become more aware of the importance of dental health. 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 have their teeth examined by your veterinarian. Follow us on our Facebook page "Blue River Veterinary Clinic" for other interesting facts about dental health during the month of February.



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