



The Importance of Dental Care in Dogs

By Rick Yocum

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As a dog owner, you know how important it is to take care of your companion animal's health. Dental care is an essential part of your dog's overall health. You provide them with nutritious food, regular exercise and plenty of love and attention. However, one aspect of their well-being that often gets overlooked is dental care. Just like humans, dogs can suffer from dental problems that can impact their overall health.

In this article, we will explore the importance of dental care for dogs and discuss some simple ways to keep your canine companion's teeth clean and healthy.

Did you know that dental disease is one of the most common health issues in dogs? According to the American Veterinary Dental College, by the age of three, most dogs have some form of dental disease. This can range from mild tartar buildup to more severe conditions, such as gum inflammation, tooth decay and even tooth loss.

Poor dental health can have a significant impact on your dog's overall well-being. It can cause pain and discomfort, leading to difficulty eating and a reduced appetite. Dental disease can also result in bad breath, which can make it unpleasant to be around your furry friend. Additionally, bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and affect vital organs, such as the heart, liver and kidneys, potentially causing serious health issues.

The good news is that with proper dental care, many dental problems in dogs can be prevented. Here are some simple steps you can take to keep your dog's teeth clean and healthy:

- **Regular Brushing**—Just like humans, dogs benefit from regular toothbrushing. Use a toothbrush and toothpaste specially formulated for dogs, as human toothpaste can be toxic to them. Start by gradually introducing the toothbrush and toothpaste to your dog, allowing them to get used to the process. Brush their teeth gently in a circular motion, paying attention to the gum line. Aim to brush their teeth at least two to three times a week.
- **Dental Chews and Toys**—Chewing on appropriate dental chews and toys can help remove plaque and tartar buildup. Look for products that are specifically designed to promote dental health, such as those with ridges or textures that help clean the teeth. Avoid hard objects like bones, as they can cause tooth fractures.
- **Healthy Diet**—Providing your dog with a balanced and nutritious diet is essential for their overall health, including dental health. Avoid feeding them sugary treats or table scraps, as these can contribute to dental problems. Choose high-quality dog food that supports dental health, and consult with your veterinarian for specific dietary recommendations.
- **Regular Vet Check-ups**—Routine visits to the veterinarian are crucial for maintaining your dog's dental health. During these visits, your vet can examine your dog's teeth, perform professional cleanings, if necessary, and provide guidance on home dental care.

Despite our best efforts, dental issues can still arise in dogs. Being aware of the signs of dental problems can help you detect

issues early and seek appropriate veterinary care. Look out for the following signs:

- **Bad Breath**—While it's normal for a dog's breath to have a slight odor, persistent bad breath can indicate dental disease.
- **Red or Bleeding Gums**—Healthy gums should be pink and free of inflammation or bleeding. If you notice any abnormalities, it could be a sign of gum disease.
- **Loose or Missing Teeth**—Adult dogs should not have loose teeth. If you notice any wobbling or missing teeth, it's important to have them evaluated by a veterinarian.
- **Excessive Drooling**—Excessive drooling can be a sign of oral pain or discomfort, often associated with dental issues.



*Rick Yocum, Executive Director
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of Manatee County*

Dental health is an extremely important part of your pet's overall health and is the reason that annual dental appointments to examine an animal's gums and teeth are highly recommended. These annual dental visits allow our HSMC veterinarians to check for early signs of a problem and to keep your pet's mouth healthy.

Veterinary dental procedures begin with an oral exam by one of our staff veterinarians to evaluate your pet's overall oral health.

The actual dental procedure includes the cleaning, scaling, polishing, filing, extraction or repair of your pet's teeth. A thorough dental cleaning is performed while the animal is under anesthesia and under the supervision of a veterinarian. We also offer dental X-rays in a state-of-the-art dental suite.

Make your pet's dental health a priority. Dental problems can cause—or be caused—by other health issues, which is why your pet's oral health is so important.

Visit www.humanemanatee.org, and discover all of the dental services available at The Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic, where low-to-moderate costs ensure all animals in our community can receive the care they deserve. 🐾

Humane Society of Manatee County is located at 2515 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8808. The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, visit www.humanemanatee.org online, or send an e-mail to info@humanesocietymanatee.org.

Open to the public, Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic is located at 2415 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8808, Option #1. The veterinary clinic is open by appointment Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For details about HSMC's veterinary clinic, visit www.humanemanatee.org.

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