



PRESS RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February is National Pet Dental Health Month

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The VVMA would like to remind all pet owners that February is National Pet Dental Health Month. Sponsored by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), National Pet Dental Health Month message reminds pet owners that dental health is a very important part of your pet's overall health. Your pet's teeth and gums should be checked at least once a year by your veterinarian to check for early signs of a problem and to keep your pet's mouth healthy.

Veterinary dentistry includes the scaling, polishing, filing, extraction, or repair of your pet's teeth and all other aspects of oral health care. These procedures must be performed by a veterinarian or a board-certified veterinary dentist. The process begins with an oral exam of your pet's mouth by a veterinarian. If there is dental disease present, dental work will be recommended. Most dental disease occurs below the gumline, where you can't see it, so dental work is all performed under anesthesia in order to be safe and effective.

Signs of dental disease include bad breath, broken or loose teeth, abnormal chewing or drooling. One may also notice bleeding from the mouth, reduced appetite, and swelling around the mouth. If you notice any of these signs, schedule an exam for your pet.

Periodontal disease is the most common dental condition in dogs and cats, in fact by the time your pet is 3 years old, there is an estimated 70 percent chance they will have periodontal disease. The earlier it is detected, the faster treatment can be recommended, which is important as advanced periodontal disease can cause severe problems and pain for your pet. Periodontal disease is an inflammatory condition of the gum and bone support (periodontal tissues) surrounding the teeth.

It starts with plaque that hardens into calculus. Calculus above the gumline can often easily be seen and removed, but below the gumline it is damaging and can cause infections and damage to the tissues or bone. This can cause loose teeth, bone loss, pain around the tooth, and fractured teeth. The treatment of periodontal disease involves a comprehensive oral and radiographic exam. Further, periodontal disease affects more than your pet's mouth: kidney, liver, and heart muscle changes can occur in association with periodontal disease.

Prevention of periodontal disease in pets consists of frequent removal of the dental calculus that forms on teeth that are not kept clean. Regularly brushing your pet's teeth is the single most effective thing you can do to keep their teeth healthy between dental cleanings and may reduce the frequency or even eliminate the need for periodic dental cleaning by your veterinarian. Daily brushing is best, but it's not always possible and brushing several times a week can be effective. Most dogs accept brushing, but cats can be a bit more resistant – patience and training are important.

There are many pet products marketed with claims that they improve dental health, but not all of them are effective. Look for a seal of approval from the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) and make sure to discuss any dental products/diets you are considering with your veterinarian.

If you have any questions or concerns about your pet's dental health please contact your veterinarian.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 375 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.