

HELPFUL HINTS FOR BRUSHING YOUR PET'S TEETH

Start young - introduce the concept of tooth brushing as early as possible in the life of your pet. But don't worry, you CAN teach old dogs (and cats) new tricks!

The Golden Rules

- Make all training experiences as pleasant as possible by giving lots of attention and positive reward.
- Start with short periods of training and gradually increase the time. Tooth brushing should take no longer than 5 minutes, therefore the training itself should gradually build up to a maximum of 5 minutes.
- Only use pet toothpaste - never human toothpaste. Human toothpastes contain fluoride and foaming agents that may cause stomach upset in pets since they swallow the paste rather than spit it out.

Simple Steps to Easier Brushing

1. Try to get your pet used to having their mouth area and muzzle handled.
2. Start by gently handling the muzzle area for a few seconds on a regular basis. Provide lots of praise and positive reward. As soon as your pet starts to show its dislike, stop and try again later. For best results with puppies and kittens, choose "quiet times" only for handling the mouth and muzzle area. End each session on a positive note.
3. Next, introduce a pet toothpaste.
 - ~ The primary function of veterinary toothpaste is not to clean the teeth, but simply to serve as a tasty treat to make the brushing process more pleasant.
 - ~ Introduce a small amount of toothpaste with a finger and gently use the finger in the same manner as a toothbrush.
 - ~ Start with the canine teeth (fangs) and gradually work around the entire mouth. Be sure to include the gums as well as the teeth.
4. Now it's time to introduce the toothbrush.
 - ~ It is the mechanical action of the toothbrush that cleans your pet's teeth, so this is a crucial stage.
 - ~ Use a toothbrush provided by your veterinarian or a soft bristled child's toothbrush with a small head.
 - ~ Always wet the bristles of the brush before placing the toothbrush into your pet's mouth.
 - ~ Place a line of toothpaste on the brush and press it firmly into the bristles with your finger.
 - ~ Hold the toothbrush like a pen (see picture below) and concentrate solely on the canine teeth for the first few days until your pet has accepted the toothbrush.

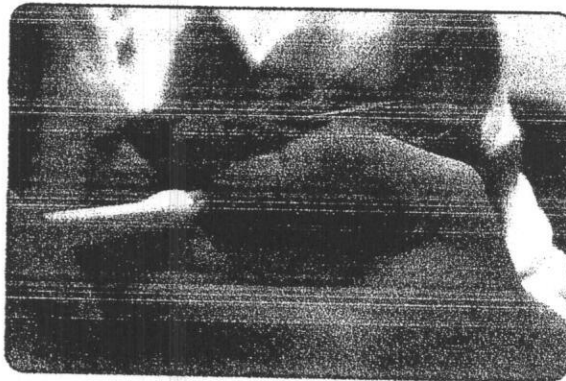
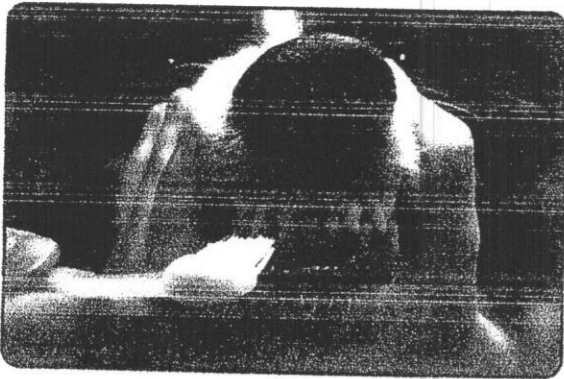
5. Once your pet has accepted the toothbrush and toothpaste, you can start to use a gentle circular motion and work along the top teeth from the canines to the back of the mouth.
 - ~ Repeat on the other side.
 - ~ Gradually build up the amount of time and pressure applied to each tooth.
 - ~ Once you and your pet are comfortable with the top teeth being brushed, your attention can then move to the bottom row of teeth, using the same process.
 - ~ The good news is that most of the tartar accumulation occurs on the outside surface of the teeth so it is not necessary to brush the inside surfaces.
 - ~ The speed of this step is dependent on your pet and may take from several days to a month.

6. Your final step is brushing the front teeth.
 - ~ View the diagrams below to help position your hand while brushing the front teeth.
 - ~ Use an up and down motion on these teeth.

7. Remember to continually give praise and positive reward.

Ask your veterinary team for a demonstration and/or for additional helpful hints.

The time and effort that you commit to this training process can make a significant improvement in your pet's dental health. This will impact the quality of life of your pet and enhance the bond that you will share with your companion animal.



Reference

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