

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

Starting Them Right

A Guide to Dental Health for Your Pet

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Start a regular teeth cleaning routine as soon as possible. Don't wait until your pet's gums are red and sore as this will just make the job harder. If possible, make the early training a two-person task with one holding and the other cleaning the teeth.

Training Schedule

DAY 1: Gently pet and scratch the muzzle, slowly lifting the lip for about 5 seconds. Use a broth or a meat flavored pet toothpaste as a reward at the end of the session. If your pet struggles, do not immediately let go, instead, wait for him or her to relax and hold still. Then letting go will be perceived as a reward for being good, not as a reward for squirming.

DAY 2: Repeat as above except put broth or toothpaste on your finger and gently run your finger over the pet's teeth for up to 15 seconds. Do not open the pet's mouth. Instead, hold the mouth closed and slide your finger between cheek and gum. Reward good behavior.

DAY 3: Repeat day 2, adding a few seconds time to running your finger over the pet's teeth. Again, reward.

DAY 4: If all is going well, brush teeth with finger for 10 seconds and then gently run toothbrush over teeth for 5 seconds. Use only pet toothpaste now.

DAY 5: Repeat as above, and increase the time with the toothbrush in the pet's mouth. Also start working on getting all the teeth including the molars in the back.

DAY 6: Brush your pet's teeth with brush and toothpaste doing a good job without feeling rushed. Be sure you are keeping this fun.

DAY 7: You know your pet best of all. If you feel that he is accepting the brushing well, gradually increase the brushing time until you are able to spend as much time as you need.

HINTS: For the first few times use warm chicken broth on your finger and the brush. Hold the pet's mouth in a closed position and rub gently along the front incisor teeth, working along each side to the back of the mouth to clean the outside of the teeth. (Do not worry about cleaning the inside of the teeth because this can be difficult and is often unnecessary since the motion of the tongue usually keeps tartar away.) Use a toothbrush designed for pets or a child's soft

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toothbrush and use only pet toothpaste (poultry flavored works well). We also have a special finger toothbrush that many find easier to use. If you find you absolutely cannot brush your pet's teeth, don't give up on dental care. There are sprays that you can use by lifting the pet's lips and simply spraying on the gums (although this is not as good as brushing). There is also a wonderful diet made by Hill's called TD that is available through Veterinarians and keeps tartar under control without you having to do anything but feed it to your pet. Rawhide chews work well for dogs but use the chips and not the knotted bones because some dogs may try to swallow a large knot and choke.

Remember to be patient with the training, use lots of praise and try to make it fun! If you have any questions, please call the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾