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Conventional & Holistic Veterinary Care

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TOOTHBRUSHING MADE EASY

1. Start young – Introduce your pet to tooth brushing as early as possible, but don't worry you CAN teach old dog's (and cats) new tricks.
2. Introduce hand and finger contact – Get your pet used to accepting you around their mouth area. Make this pleasant for them, giving lots of attention and praise. Begin with short periods and gradually build up the time involved. Tooth brushing should take no longer than 5 minutes. If at any point they begin to show a dislike, stop and try again later. Always end on a positive note.
3. Introduce toothpaste – There are a number of brands available for pets. The primary function of veterinary toothpaste is to serve as a tasty treat; the pet must enjoy the flavour. Introduce the toothpaste on your finger and using your finger in the same way as a toothbrush begin working around the teeth, begin with the canines and gradually progress around the teeth and gums. Remember to praise continually. This can take time i.e. a few minutes each time for 3-4 weeks, if at any time your pet resents this go back to the previous stage and try again at a later date. Be patient it will pay off in the end.
DON'T USE HUMAN TOOTHPASTE – This contains fluoride and foaming agents which can cause stomach upsets and unlike us, your pet cannot spit it out.
4. Introduce the toothbrush – It is the action of the toothbrush which cleans the teeth, so this is a crucial stage. Veterinary toothbrushes are available or a soft bristled childs brush with a long handle and small head will do.
 - ✓ Wet the brush and apply a line of toothpaste press firmly into the bristles. The toothpaste may have to be re-applied during the process. For the first few days concentrate solely on the canines following an up and down process until your pet has accepted the brush.
 - ✓ When this has been accepted you can then start to use a gentle circular motion, working along the top teeth from the canines to the back (initially avoiding the middle teeth).
 - ✓ Gradually build up the time and pressure applied to each tooth, and when you are both comfortable with the top teeth move onto the bottom teeth, using the same process. The speed of this step is very pet-dependent and can take anything from several days to a month.
 - ✓ As most tartar build up occurs on the outer surface of the teeth it is not necessary to stress yourself or your pet by attempting to brush the inside.
 - ✓ REMEMBER CONTINUOUS PRAISE
 - ✓ Once your pet is happy with the above, you can then move on to the teeth at the front. With dogs a middle finger can be placed on the top of the nose, an index finger placed between the nostrils and the mouth (being careful not to interfere with the animals breathing) and a thumb positioned on the bottom lip, again starting with an up and down movement and gradually progressing to a circular movement. In cats the owner should gently place the palm of the hand over the head gripping the upper jaw with the thumb and forefinger.