

NHS Article for February 12

Northwoods Humane Society – Alecia Austin, Shelter Manager

The Importance of Dental Care for Your Pets

Did you know that your pet's dental health is just as important as their overall well-being? Dental issues in pets can lead to pain, infections, and even more serious health problems if left untreated

Why Dental Care Matters for Pets

Just like in humans, plaque and tartar build-up can lead to tooth decay and gum disease in pets. Poor dental hygiene can also contribute to more severe health conditions, including:

Bad Breath: Often a sign of bacterial build-up or gum disease.

Gum Disease: Red, swollen, or bleeding gums are common indicators that your pet may have gingivitis or more serious periodontal disease.

Tooth Loss: In advanced cases, untreated dental issues can lead to tooth loss and chronic pain.

Heart, Liver, and Kidney Problems: Bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and affect other vital organs, leading to long-term health issues.

Regular dental care not only prevents these problems but also keeps your pet comfortable, happy, and healthy for many years to come!

How to Keep Your Pet's Teeth Healthy

Brush Your Pet's Teeth Regularly Just like us, brushing your pet's teeth is the most effective way to remove plaque and prevent tartar build-up. Start by getting your pet accustomed to the process. You can use a finger brush or a pet-safe toothbrush with a small amount of pet toothpaste (never use human toothpaste, as it can be harmful to animals).

Aim for brushing their teeth a few times a week. If daily brushing is a struggle, just make it a regular habit and your pet will start to get used to it.

Provide Dental Chews and Toys Dental chews are a great way to help keep your pet's teeth clean between brushings. Look for products that are designed to reduce plaque and tartar. Be sure to choose dental treats that are appropriate for your pet's size and chewing habits, and always supervise them while they chew. Additionally, there are many pet-safe chew toys that can help scrape away tartar while keeping your pet entertained.

Incorporate Dental Diets Did you know that certain pet food brands offer dental-specific diets? These foods are specially designed to reduce plaque and tartar build-up through larger kibble or specific textures. Talk to your veterinarian about incorporating these types of food into your pet's diet to support their dental health.

Regular Vet Check-ups Routine vet visits are key to preventing and identifying dental issues early. Your veterinarian will check your pet's teeth during their annual exams and recommend a professional cleaning if necessary. If your pet already has noticeable dental issues, your vet may suggest more frequent visits for cleanings or treatments.

In some cases, professional cleanings may be required to address tartar and plaque that brushing at home can't reach.

Watch for Warning Signs Being proactive means knowing what to look for. Watch out for signs that your pet may be having dental problems: Bad breath (halitosis), difficulty eating or chewing, red, swollen, or bleeding gums, drooling excessively or pawing at the mouth, discolored or broken

teeth. If you notice any of these signs, schedule a vet visit as soon as possible. Early intervention can prevent more serious issues down the road.

While dental care is important for both dogs and cats, there are some differences in how you approach it:

Dogs: Many dogs are more receptive to teeth brushing and dental chews. However, large-breed dogs and those with certain health conditions may be at greater risk for dental issues.

Cats: Cats are often more sensitive to dental care and can be more prone to dental disease, particularly as they age. Consider starting early with tooth brushing, and be gentle during the process. Special dental diets are also available for cats with oral health concerns.

Prevention is Key. **Your Pet's Smile Matters**

Dates to Save: March 7, 20, May 3, 17, May 1 Bingo at Powell's on Round Lake – 5:30 pm

April 27 – Spay-ghetti and No Balls – Vet Center 5 pm

May 23 – Dining For Cats and Dogs – Lynne's Custom Meats – 10:30 to 2 p.m.

June 7 – Raise the Woof – Eagles Cover Band – Park Center – 7:30 pm