

February is pet dental care month. Dental disease is very prevalent in companion animals as more than 70% of cats and dogs over the age of 2 have some form of dental disease. Like us, pets build up plaque on their teeth as a result of eating. Plaque consists of bacteria and food particles, and will harden in to tartar if left untreated. Not only does this lead to dental diseases such as gingivitis, infections and weakened or broken teeth, but it also has been shown to hamper the function of several different body organs. Dental tartar in the mouth is a constant source of bacteria for the rest of the body, as it gets into the blood and spreads to different organs.

There are several things you can do to help reduce the plaque and tartar build-up in your pet. Frequent brushing is ideal to help eliminate plaque before it hardens into tartar. Make sure you use a pet toothpaste as they do not contain fluoride and are meant to be swallowed. Also, they come in pet friendly flavors that may make your pet more welcoming to the idea. A lot of cats will even tolerate this if it is introduced properly. For pets that aren't accustomed to having their teeth brushed or having their mouth touched, you want to make a very gradual transition. Start by just touching their mouth while petting them and allowing them to get used to that. Try to associate this with a play time or bring a treat to make it a positive experience. Allow your pet to taste the toothpaste on several occasions to get more familiar with it before beginning brushing. Make gradual transitions and remember to make it a positive experience! Give lots of praise and attention before and after. Once a pet is in the routine, they may not need the extra steps and may enjoy it if they like the flavor of the toothpaste.

Another way to help reduce plaque in dogs is by giving them things to chew on. Dogs should be supervised when chewing on bones or toys to make sure they don't swallow a piece. Daily or frequent chewing will scrape away a lot of the plaque build-up.

Once the plaque hardens in to tartar we have to perform dental cleanings under anesthesia with an ultrasonic scaler to remove it. This can be very beneficial if there is substantial tartar build-up, gingivitis or your pet is particularly prone to dental disease.

To check your pet's teeth at home, lift the lip up and back to try to get a good look at the molars which are the teeth furthest back in the mouth. The molars are where we most frequently see tartar and fractured teeth.

In order to promote dental hygiene for our patients during pet dental month, we are giving a 10% discount on dental cleanings. If you have any questions about your cat or dog's dental care, don't hesitate to give us a call.

Midway Animal Hospital
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