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## **Dental Care is SO Important**

As you have probably discovered by now, your new puppy or your new kitten has a mouthful of very sharp baby teeth. Between the ages of 4 months and 6 months these will be replaced by strong, white, healthy adult teeth. Since we don't foresee any problems with your pet's teeth for many years, why do we want you to begin home dental care now?

Good dental care must start now because, just like us, your pet needs to get used to having a dental care routine. He will need to get used to having his mouth and teeth handled. This way, when he gets older he will willingly accept this dental care routine.

### **Dental Plaque and Calculus**

Just like humans, dogs and cats get plaque that builds up on their teeth. You and I take many positive actions to prevent this, like brushing and flossing. With your pet, if the plaque isn't removed from the teeth, it hardens into Calculus. The bacteria within this substance cause gingivitis, which is a reversible irritation of the gums. This is the time to have your pet's teeth cleaned by your veterinarian. If regular home dental care and regular cleanings by your veterinarian are not done, gingivitis can rapidly progress into periodontal disease.

### **Periodontal Disease**

Periodontal disease is a serious problem affecting 90% of dogs over 5 years of age. This disease progresses as the bacteria attach the gums, ligaments and even the bone that help support the teeth and keep them in place. These bacteria will be released into the blood stream as the dog or cat eats and swallows. Once in the blood stream, it can travel throughout the body and can cause infections in the kidneys, the liver, and even the heart. As the pet's body constantly fights the bacteria, it can weaken the immune system and leave them open to other infections and problems.

## **Prevention**

**Brushing** - This can be accomplished with a soft washcloth, or a soft pediatric toothbrush, or a finger brush.

**Toothpaste** - You can't use human toothpaste with your pet because they will swallow it! There are several special products that you can purchase that are safe to use, and will taste good to your cat or dog too!

**Diet** - There is a diet made by Hills called T/D. This diet is very hard and crunchy. It is specially designed to scrape the plaque from the teeth with every bite! You can give these as treats, or use it as your pet's complete diet.

**Treats** - There are several different treats that we recommend that will help your pet's teeth. For cats, there are the CET Chews, and for dogs, there are CET Chews or you can

use the T/D diet! We do not recommend rawhide. It can cause some stomach upset and can also be a choking hazard!

**Toys** - There are many different toys on the market that can help with dental care. “Greenies” are a popular product available in pet stores, and Nylabones are a good alternative to rawhide because pieces cannot break off. If you have any questions about specific toys, please ask!