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Dental Care and Oral Health

For most of us, caring for our teeth and gums has been part of our daily routine for as long as we can remember. We understand that without this daily attention, and without regular visits to the dentist, serious problems with our teeth and gums eventually would result. Your dog needs dental care too- regular, professional care from your veterinarian, as well as care at home from you.

THE PROBLEMS THAT MAY LEAD TO TOOTH LOSS

Plaque is a colorless film composed of bacteria, proteins, sugars, white blood cells, minerals and water. It forms naturally and continuously on teeth and gums. As with people, within 24 hours of a professional cleaning and polishing, even a healthy mouth will show evidence of plaque accumulation. Invisible to the unaided eye for days or weeks, plaque accumulation may lead to mouth odor, pain, infection, and tooth loss.

AS PLAQUE BUILDS UP THE GUMS BECOME INFLAMED

Pockets of infection may form around the roots of the tooth. After mixing with food particles and minerals in saliva, some of the plaque will harden as it dries. This hard deposit is called tartar, and like plaque it can contribute to periodontal disease (gum disease). Eventually, the bone and ligament that support the tooth are destroyed and the tooth is lost.

THE NEED FOR PREVENTION

All dogs are at risk for developing these kinds of dental problems; smaller breeds have the highest prevalence. Once your dog displays the warning signs- mouth odor, a yellow-brown crust of tartar around the gum line, pain or bleeding when your dog eats or when its mouth or gums are touched- irreversible periodontal disease may result. But you shouldn't wait for these signs before starting a program of veterinary supervised preventive dental care.

Here are three important steps you should follow for a complete oral care program:

Step 1. VISIT YOUR VETERINARIAN

In addition to giving your dog a thorough physical examination and taking a complete medical history, the doctor may use a dye to make plaque more visible during the oral exam. Based on the results of your exam, your doctor may recommend a thorough cleaning and polishing of the teeth.

Step 2. START YOUR DENTAL CARE ROUTINE AT HOME

Plaque should be removed mechanically every day. Brushing your dog's teeth can accomplish this, as well as a new type of food called Prescription Diet Canine t/d, available exclusively from your veterinarian.

Brushing. Use a toothbrush and toothpaste designed for dogs; common household toothpaste may cause stomach upset. Ask your veterinarian about the procedures for brushing. Training your dog to adapt to brushing may take several days or even weeks.

Prescription Diet Canine t/d. this specially designed dietary food will help reduce the accumulation of plaque from teeth while your dog is eating. It utilizes an oversized kibble that gently scrubs the surface of your dog's teeth as it chews, without using active chemical ingredients or mineral abrasives. And, it gives your dog complete and balanced nutrition. Prescription diet Canine t/d is your most convenient way to minimize the accumulation of plaque, stain, and tartar as well as reducing bad breath.

Never moisten Prescription Diet Canine t/d. Adding water will negate the cleaning action. Your veterinarian will tell you the right amount to feed as a starting point and may advise you to adjust the amount as needed. As with any new food, introduce it to your pet's diet gradually over a five to ten day period. Mix in your dog's former food, gradually increasing the proportion of Prescription Diet Canine t/d until your dog has made the full transition.

Step 3. VISIT YOUR VETERINARIAN FOR REGULAR PROFESSIONAL DENTAL CHECKUPS.

Your veterinarian needs to monitor the progress of your dog's preventive program, so regular dental checkups are essential. For dogs who form plaque quickly or have a history of gum and teeth problems, more frequent examinations and cleaning may be advised.

Prescription Diet Canine t/d and the *Canine t/d Dental Care Plan* are designed to work together. As a package, they can help you protect your dog's oral health easily, effectively and economically. Ask your veterinarian or veterinary technician how you can earn up to \$20 per pet, per year to be used toward professional dental services.

SPECIAL HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR PET
