

THE PET CONNECTION

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Doggie Dental Care

Ok, whose gotten a kiss lately from their doggie pal and almost gagged on their furry kid's bad breath?! Most likely that bad breath is a result of tartar build up on your dog's teeth. Don't be fooled by those pearly white canine teeth in the front of your dog's mouth, the culprits are usually the molars way in the back that you never get a look at. There are several ways to reduce tartar build up on your dog's teeth. And all of the following suggestions will work for cats too, if you are very brave :)

First choice, but not always the easiest, is to brush your dog's teeth every day. That's right, there are doggie tooth brushes and toothpastes galore for you to pick from. Canine tooth brushes often have longer handles than their human counter parts, and smaller brush heads. There are also thimble like brushes, made of rubber, that are designed to fit over your index finger tip. I actually use both types on my Jack Russell terrier with good results.

Of course you need some kind of toothpaste to go with those brushes; and they make them just for dogs, in flavors like chicken and beef. I like the toothpastes that contain enzymes. These enzymes help to stop tartar build up by lessening the bacterial levels in your dog's mouth. And ingredients such as clove, ginger, and spearmint oil promote healthy gums and better breath. A note of caution, do not use people toothpaste on your dogs teeth, the sodium lauryl sulfate foams too much, and most human toothpaste contains fluoride which should not be swallowed by people or dogs.

For those of you who laughed when I suggested that you brush your dog's teeth every day, I have some other options. There are several doggie dental sprays on the market that do a pretty good job of controlling tartar without brushing. "Petzlife" and "Leba III" are the two that I would recommend. You can also make your own dental spray by mixing 3 parts distilled water to 1 part grain alcohol (NOT rubbing alcohol) and a few drops of food grade peppermint oil to taste. Put in a 4oz spray bottle and spritz both sides of your dog's mouth morning and night for the first two weeks. Once you have the tartar under control you can spray just once a day.

Another way of reducing tartar build up is the use of chew bones. I prefer real bones to rawhide, unless you can find organic, grass fed, American made rawhide. Real bones should be raw, not cooked, with as much of the marrow removed as possible, since too much marrow can cause a severe case of diarrhea. Real bones can be messy, so you might want to have a designated area for your dog to chew them, outdoors probably being best :)

Some breeds, no matter how hard you try to keep their teeth clean, are very prone to dental problems. Poodles, Yorkshire Terriers, and Maltese often suffer from tooth decay severe enough to require dental cleaning, under anesthesia, and/or the removal of the affected teeth by a veterinarian. Some of this predisposition is genetic, but you can help reduce tooth decay in any dog by feeding a dry kibble instead of a canned food, and by implementing one or more of the above suggestions for doggie dental hygiene.

Good luck, and happy brushing, spraying, and chewing!

PAWS FOR REFLECTION

“Love is when a puppy licks your face after you left him alone all day.”

-Unknown