



# Pet Dental Health MONTH



An initiative of The Australian Veterinary Association

## Dental health for dogs and cats

Four out of every five dogs and cats over the age of three years have some sort of dental disease which becomes more severe with age. This can be a real problem for pets and owners because it can lead to more serious problems such as illnesses related to the heart, liver and kidney.

You should check your pet's teeth regularly as pets often won't show pain. Even pets with sore gums, an infected mouth or broken teeth will continue to eat so you may not notice they have problems.

Dogs are pack animals and showing weakness is not part of their nature. They need to eat to survive so won't go off their food until the pain is unbearable.

Signs of toothache or an infection in the mouth to look out for in cats and dogs include bad breath, red and inflamed gums and stained teeth. Your pet may also start dropping food when they are eating.

It's important that pets have regular health checks at the vet. Dogs and cats age much more quickly than humans, and it's important to catch problems early if you want to ensure a long and happy life for your companion animal. Checking your pet's teeth will be part of your annual health check.

Annual dental checks are an ideal opportunity for owners to find out if their pet has an existing problem which has gone unnoticed. Dental checks also help ensure bacteria and poisons from dental infections do not spread to the heart, liver and

kidneys through the bloodstream.

Vets also recommend regular tooth brushing. Tooth brushing is safer and more effective than chewing and many dogs and cats can be trained to enjoy having their teeth brushed, especially if started when they're young.

Although bones are a popular treat that you may be using for dental care, they can cause problems such as broken teeth and gut obstructions.



**>> As well as an annual health and dental check, there are a few other things you need to do to make sure your cat or dog stays well:**

- Feed them a balanced diet
- Make sure they get plenty of exercise
- If you're not around to keep them company, make sure there are lots of things to play with to stop them getting bored
- Give them lots of love and attention.

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