

PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL PET DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Vermont Veterinarians Say Animals, like Humans, Need Regular Checkups

If you ever wonder what your teeth would look like if you never brushed or flossed, take a look at your dog or cat's teeth! According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, more than 85 percent of dogs and cats show signs of oral disease by age three. The trouble begins when food particles and bacteria build up in the mouth to form plaque and tartar, which leads to reversible gingivitis. Gingivitis, if ignored, will progress to periodontal disease. Irreversible periodontal disease is a painful process that leads to tooth decay, bad breath, bleeding gums and, in severe cases, tooth loss. When bacteria from periodontal disease travels into a pet's bloodstream, the lungs, heart, kidneys, liver and nervous system can be affected. These infections usually are treatable when caught at an early stage. However, if they are not caught in time, they can cause serious organ damage and even death.

All pets are at risk for developing dental problems, so it is important for you to have your pets examined by a veterinarian annually to detect problems early. It also is important for owners to check their pets often between visits for these warning signs:

- Bad breath
- Tartar buildup on the teeth
- Swollen, receding or bleeding gums
- Fractured or abscessed teeth
- Change in eating habits

A pet should be taken to a veterinarian immediately if it shows any of the above symptoms. The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association urges all pet owners during "National Pet Dental Health Care Month" to review their pet's dental care and take the necessary steps to ensure their pet has healthy teeth and gums. These steps include visiting a veterinarian at least once a year, where recommendations may be made for cleaning, polishing and other dental care in the hospital and a program of home dental care which may include regular brushing, dental diets, and dental chews.

by M. Kathleen Shaw DVM

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 330 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.vtvets.org or call (802) 878-6888.