

## Kidney Disease, Diabetes Can Cause Dogs' Bad Breath

**Look beyond dental problems to solve bad breath in dogs.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. My healthy 2-year-old Coton de Tulear has the world's worst breath. Truly, he smells like he is full of dead fish! I have other dogs, so I understand dog breath. He just went for his physical exam, and the vet tells me that he is perfectly healthy. His teeth are also fine. The vet suggested changing his dog food, but he wasn't convinced that would change the breath issue. Are there any safe additives to his diet that would neutralize his breath? Help!

A. I find myself starting to gag just reading about the mouthful of dead fish your dog carries around. Hopefully he is not too generous with his licks and kisses!

Numerous products can help your dog's breath, assuming there is no underlying disease.

In addition to dental disease, two other diseases cause bad breath. Most likely, you and your veterinarian would see other signs of either of these diseases. DKA, or severe diabetes, causes a change in breath due to a change in metabolism. The other disease that can cause foul breath is kidney failure, which leads to a buildup of uremic toxins in the bloodstream. Both of these can be ruled out with routine blood screening tests.

Greenies, mint-flavored CET Rawhide Chews, and other similar products will all help freshen your dog's breath, and at the same time help maintain dental health due to the products' scraping, abrasive qualities. A dry diet will help promote fresher breath as well. Sprinkling some ground mint leaves on his food certainly would not hurt.

Good luck and thank you for your question.