

Looking Out for Doggie Dental Health

Just like people, dogs need regular dental care and routine checkups.

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Just like people, dogs and puppies need daily dental care, and adult dogs need routine checkups and cleanings to keep their mouths healthy.

“It’s difficult to recognize signs of oral health problems because cats and dogs often stick to their normal routines, including eating, even though they are in pain,” said California Veterinary Medical Association President Ron Faoro, DVM. “However, constant or unusually bad breath, as well as yellowing teeth, should serve as a warning that the animal needs evaluation by a veterinary professional.”

“Since they aren’t going to tell us, the only way to know our pets are healthy and pain-free is to have them evaluated by a veterinarian,” according to Melissa A. Gates, DVM, of Cordova Veterinary Hospital in Rancho Cordova, Calif. “A licensed professional will know what steps need to be taken to reverse problems and help you establish a preventative home care routine.”

Many dogs, especially those without a daily brushing routine, need to have their teeth cleaned to remove the plaque buildup that causes dental disease. Owners often are surprised by the cost, which can start around \$300 for a routine checkup and cleaning. But a dog’s dental care includes blood work and anesthesia to ensure the pet’s health as well as the veterinary professional’s safety.

“We humans can be awake and stay still as someone with a drill puts their hands in our mouths, but pets will not tolerate that. And if someone is cleaning your pet’s teeth without anesthesia, they aren’t doing a thorough job,” Gates said.

Gates said daily brushing may take a little getting used to for pets, but pointed out that they allow their owners to brush their coats and use electric clippers on them.

“With patience, proper handling and a little behavior modification, daily teeth brushing should not be a problem and may even be fun for both of you,” she said.

- Brush up on the basics of doggie dental health -