

## Maintain Dogs' Teeth, Gums With Proper Care

**The ASPCA offers dental health tips to keep dogs' teeth clean and healthy.**

Posted: September 19, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

The ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) is kicking off October as National Canine Good Health Month by providing dog owners with effective tips to help ensure the dental health of their pet.

Knowing how to maintain your dog's teeth and gums can be difficult, which is why the ASPCA has provided a few tips for dog owners:

Don't ignore the bad breath. A dog's bad breath may be saying more than we think. "Bad breath is most commonly an indication that your dog is in need of a dental check up," says Dr. Louise Murray, director of medicine at the ASPCA's Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital. "In some cases it may be indicative of fairly serious, chronic problems such as liver or intestinal disease."

Set aside a time for teeth brushing. Help maintain the healthy state of your dog's mouth by brushing his teeth and gums regularly, feeding your dog a specially formulated dental diet and by avoiding giving him table scraps. The outside of your canine's upper and lower teeth can be cleaned with dog toothpaste or a mix of baking soda and water once or twice a week. You can use a child's soft toothbrush, a gauze pad or a piece of nylon pantyhose stretched over your finger to brush your dog's teeth, suggests the ASPCA.

Help your puppy get through the teething years. Between four and eight months of age, puppies will lose their teeth and grow a permanent set. Chewing can help the discomfort that accompanies teething so give your dog a chew bone or toy as a substitute when the puppy tries to chew on fingers or toes. Provide your canine with a variety of toys that are size appropriate to help keep your dog's interest.

"It's important to regularly check your animal companion's teeth and gums," continues Dr. Murray, "and make teeth cleaning a regular part of your dog's health program."