**Oral Health for Dogs**

### According to the American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS), 80% of dogs show signs of oral disease by age three, often indicated by bad breath, a change in eating or chewing habits, pawing at the face and mouth and depression. Besides causing receding gums and tooth loss, bacteria in the mouth can enter the bloodstream and over time, damage the heart, liver and kidneys. Regular professional care from a veterinarian and daily home care are the best ways to attain healthy mouths in dogs.

**Healthy Mouths Start at Home: 5 Ways to Promote Oral Health**

**1. Brush 2-3 times a week.** Brushing a dog’s teeth is the most effective method of keeping teeth and gums healthy. Brushing teeth will help control plaque buildup, which needs to be removed from a dog’s teeth before it mineralizes into tartar. It’s best to introduce a dental hygiene regimen slowly, ensuring a comfortable and happy experience for all.

**2. Provide Chews, Treats and Toys.** For dogs, chewing helps to keep their teeth and gums healthy. Safe chews and toys can keep plaque from building up on the teeth and prevent bad breath. Many treats are available that aid in dental health. Some include ingredients to promote digestion and fight plaque, but things as simple as treat size and shape can help promote healthy teeth and gums.

To ensure safety, always supervise a dog when giving them new toys or treats.

**3. Introduce Supplements for Oral Health.** Intended to promote proper digestion and fight plaque and tartar, there are a number of supplements that help to keep teeth clean. Made with ingredients such as seaweed and cheese enzymes, dental supplements are available in a handful of forms including powders and liquids.

**4. Feed Foods that Promote a Healthy Mouth Environment.**

* **Dental Formulas.** A few dry dog foods are formulated specifically to support dental health. The larger kibble size encourages chewing, which may create a gentle scrubbing action on the teeth. Most dental formulas also include ingredients that promote a healthy mouth environment.
* **Raw Foods.** Raw foods often improve the mouth and dental health by delivering nutrition in its most natural, digestible forms. Raw bones are especially effective chews for keeping dogs’ teeth clean.

**5. Schedule routine check-ups with a veterinarian.** Regular professional care and dental check-ups from veterinarians are essential to maintaining the health and happiness of dogs.