

**Gray County Veterinary Clinic**  
**1901 N. Price Road; Pampa, TX 806-665-7197**  
<http://www.graycovet.com>

As in your own mouth, there are two main components of oral health care for dogs and cats. The purpose of home care is to maintain good oral hygiene to prevent the development or progression of periodontal disease and to maintain good gingival health.

You are responsible for every aspect of your pet's daily care and care of the teeth becomes more important as we expect our pets to live longer and longer. Brushing your pet's teeth is the main component of home-care. The purpose is to remove plaque before it becomes tartar. Plaque is a slime comprised of bacteria, saliva and food particles which adheres to the teeth and fills the pocket between the tooth and gum. Left undisturbed, plaque rapidly collects minerals from the saliva to form the rock-like brown deposits known as tartar or calculus. By brushing daily, you remove plaque and so tartar builds up slower. As with all things, the results will depend on the effort you give it.

***MANY PETS REALLY ENJOY HAVING THEIR TEETH BRUSHED***

1. The first step is to work with your pet's mouth. With a little patience, your pet will soon accept your attention. **Make it fun** for both of you. Use a lot of love and especially praise to gain their confidence. Try to have your practice sessions at the same time each day so your pet gets into a routine. Late in the evening often works well, as everyone involved is generally in a quiet mood then. If your pet is highly motivated by food, try just before dinner with the meal acting as a reward for co-operating.
2. Start by handling the muzzle and tickling the lips and soon you will be able to rub the teeth and gums with your finger. Put a few drops of water, flavored with garlic or garlic salt for dogs and tuna juice for cats, in the mouth daily. They will soon look forward to this treat.
3. Next, use a washcloth or piece of pantyhose, wrapped around the end of your finger and flavored as above, to gently rub the teeth.
4. Finally, use a soft toothbrush to brush the teeth. There are several veterinary brushes available and many human brushes are well suited to animal use as well. Hold the brush at a 45-degree angle to the tooth and brush back and forth or from gum to tip. Brushing the tongue side of the teeth is less critical. Use the garlic water or tuna juice. **Make it a game.**
5. Brushing at least three times weekly is recommended (daily is much better). Human tooth paste is to be avoided as it will cause stomach upset if swallowed. Baking soda, with its very high sodium content can be dangerous to older patients. Hydrogen peroxide can be too harsh for the gums and must not be swallowed.
6. Dental diets are also available to improve oral health. These diets are to be fed as the main diet for adult dogs and cats. The food has been developed with a fiber matrix that aids in removing plaque from teeth on a daily basis. These foods are great for small breeds that are prone to early dental disease. Purina DH and Hills TD are available exclusively through veterinary clinics.
7. By following a consistent program of home-care, you will greatly improve you pet's dental health. This will mean fewer professional cleanings, less tooth loss and a happier, healthier pet. However, please remember that there is no substitute for professional veterinary care. We must work as a team to ensure a long and happy life for your pet.

**Avoid natural bones, dried cow hooves and hard nylon toys as these are hard enough to fracture teeth. Greenies are an excellent choice that will not fracture teeth.**