

# Brushing up on dental hygiene

Brushing your dog's or cat's teeth is not just about fresh breath (although it really does help). Gum disease is a common, serious problem, yet brushing can prevent it.

Vets estimate that 85% of dogs over 5 years of age suffer from periodontal disease. It is also common to see some form of dental disease in cats over the age of two – these include periodontal disease, gingivitis (inflammation of the gum) and neck lesions (deep cavities in the teeth at the gumline).

Periodontal disease develops when food particles and bacteria collect along the gum line and form soft deposits called plaque. Over time plaque develops into hard tartar and this can cause gum inflammation. As the inflamed gums begin to separate from the teeth, pockets form in which bacteria grows, causing periodontal disease to get worse. This can lead to pain, loss of teeth and bacterial infection which can spread to the kidneys, liver and brain. Periodontal disease is irreversible so prevention is the key to keeping your pet healthy and happy.

Tartar is easily identified by its light or dark brown colour - it is normally first seen at the gum edge, especially on the back teeth (premolars & molars). In severe cases it may entirely cover the teeth.

Is gingivitis always associated with dental disease? A slight degree of redness seen as a thin line just below the edge of the gum may be considered normal in some kittens and adult cats with no evidence of dental disease. If in doubt then please ask your vet to check your cat's mouth. Some cats

develop severe gingivitis with often dramatic overgrowth of the oral mucosa with minimal signs of accompanying dental disease. The affected areas may extend beyond the gums to other areas of the mouth, such as the throat or tongue.

There are a number of signs which should alert you to the possibility of dental disease or other mouth problems being present. Your pet may show no interest in food, or approach the food bowl then be reluctant to eat, or back away. They may chew with obvious caution and discomfort, drop food from the mouth, or may swallow with difficulty. Dribbling may be seen, possibly with blood, and there may be a marked unpleasant odour to the breath. In some cases you may see them pawing at their mouth or head shaking. A reluctance to eat may lead to weight loss which can become quite marked.



Whereas dogs chew their food, cats tend to swallow most of their food without chewing first. Specific dental diets for cats, which force them to chew, are therefore a good option to help.

It is ideal to brush your pet's teeth daily like you would your own, but if your schedule doesn't allow this then aim to brush at least several times a week.



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Have your pet pampered at the LOCAL INDEPENDENT VETERINARY practice offering specialist grooming

**Pet Paradise now open**  
 Sometimes a nice hair-cut and good manicure is all it takes to have you feeling your very best. But did you know a little tidy-up is often all your companion needs to feel great too?

they will have their eyes, ears, coat and teeth examined to ensure they're in great shape. They can then lay back and enjoy their experience at Pet Paradise, and you can look forward to a pet that looks great and smells fresh.

It has been proven that pampering pets can have a positive effect. Simply de-matting a cat's fur, clipping your rabbit's claws or cleaning your pooch's ears can have them feeling brand new in no time; and that's where we can help.

Pet Paradise is run from our Morecambe surgery and is available for all cats, dogs and rabbits (there are some medical exceptions however). Our treatments are also by appointment only, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to book your companion in to come and see us

At Bay Vets we are proud to announce the launch of our 'Pet Paradise: Specialist Veterinary Grooming' service at our Morecambe surgery.

**For more information, or to book a specialist grooming experience for your pet, please contact us by calling our Morecambe surgery on 01524 410867, or enquires can be Emailed to [info@bayvets.co.uk](mailto:info@bayvets.co.uk).**



As well as offering all the services you would expect, Pet Paradise is run by our team of veterinary professionals which means your companion will have a quick check-up while they're feeling comfortable and relaxed.



During your pet's pampering session

Inside this issue:

- Pet Paradise
- Travelling with your pet
- Understanding allergies
- The importance of diet for your rabbit
- Dental hygiene

Stay posted for the announcement of our annual open day.  
**October 2015**



# Travelling with your pet



## Why cant we just walk there!

Sometimes travelling in the car is unavoidable. Whether you are moving home, visiting the vets or kennels or going on holiday together - your pet has to deal with their phobia of the automobile. With a little forward planning, there is much we can do to help pets overcome fear or at least tolerate it without redecorating the upholstery.

The Highway Code states animals in cars should be under control and unable to distract you while you are driving. A crate or cage can be used in any car or an estate/hatchback can be fitted with a strong dog guard. Cats should always be transported in a cat carrier. Our nurses

have had a few exciting times trying to catch a loose cat hiding under the pedals or seats or doing the wall of death freely around the car – anything to avoid the vet!

Travel or motion sickness is a condition that affects many dogs. It is due to the effect of motion on the organs of balance located in the inner ear. Signs are usually excessive salivation, restlessness or excitement.

Also, the stress and anxiety of being in a strange environment together with the motion, sound and smell of a car can cause vomiting, toileting, vocalisation, increased respiratory rate and mouth breathing. To cats being put in a carrier can mean a scary visit to the vets or cattery and this increases their anxiety levels before even getting to the car.

In the first six months of your pet's life gradually introduce the crate/carrier/car by allowing free access to come and go as they please. With the engine off, give your animal treats in the vehicle and encourage them to rest or play with their

favourite toy. You can progress to turning the engine on and then eventually go for very short drives round the block until your animal is completely un-phased by the moving tin box. Always make the end of the journey an exciting finish – big praise, a nice walk, dinnertime.

With cat carriers and dog crates - don't take them out of the cupboard five minutes before you want to use them. Take the door off and leave them out to be used as places to rest, hide and play with toys. Ensure that the carrier is placed somewhere in the car where it will be secure if you have to brake suddenly but where it has a good air flow. Make sure that you drive carefully so that your pet is not thrown around in the car. Speak to them quietly and calmly during the journey and/or play some quiet soothing music.

The use of pheromone sprays that mimic the mother's natural pheromones given out to encourage her young to explore whilst still feeling the security of having her nearby can be very useful for travel. The car boot, crate, cat carrier can be sprayed half an hour before travel. The spray will be active in the area for 12-24 hours giving your pet a sense of calm, reducing anxiety levels and enabling them to deal with the experience more positively.

For severe motion sickness cases, consult your veterinary surgeon since there are several prescription only medicines that are extremely effective for this condition.

**TOP TIP BEFORE STEPPING OUT OF YOUR FRONT DOOR – make sure your pet is identity chipped (this is compulsory for dogs in England from April 2016) and check your contact details are up to date on the national databases. Our nurses can give you contact numbers and will check your pet's microchip number if you have lost your paperwork.**

There are many products available for pets who travel, the following items can be purchased from The Bay Vets Pet Boutique (located at our Lancaster Surgery)



# Understanding your pets allergies

Skin problems in dogs and cats can show in different patterns depending on the individual and the cause.

## Symptoms of skin allergies include:

Scratching

Baldness

Scabs

Dandruff

Sores

Ear infections

Greasiness of the coat

Licking the feet



Animals can suffer from allergies just like we can. There are many different causes of allergies including food, pollens, moulds, fleas and house

dust mites. Unfortunately we see many more allergies in the summertime, as there is more pollen and more fleas about.

An allergy is where the body overreacts to the cause rather than dealing with it quietly. The aim of treating an allergy is to damp down the reaction and also deal with the secondary effects.

The secondary effects of an allergy are often related to overgrowth of yeast and bacteria. We can prescribe special shampoos, ear cleaners, drops or antibiotics to control these. Effective and ongoing flea control can really help even if the animal is allergic to other things.

Drugs or immunotherapy are available to control the overreaction. Some of these need to be given all the time to control the allergy. This means we can treat the frustrating allergy quickly and effectively. It is important to stress that allergies are often an ongoing problem but getting the right treatment as soon as possible will keep the signs to a minimum.

# The importance of a good diet for your rabbit

Rabbits are now the third most popular pet in the country and it is always nice to see them for their vaccinations, routine treatment and cuddles. Unfortunately we do see some rabbits in a bit of a sorry state whether it is dental problems, obesity or matted bottoms. The majority of these ailments all point to one thing – THEIR DIET!



Did you know a rabbit's teeth grow continuously so they need lots of good quality hay to wear them down. In fact it is recommended a rabbit be provided

with its own body weight in fresh hay every day. If your rabbit is a diva and refuses to eat this hay then reduce the quantity of rabbit food and treats so he is not filling up on 'junk food'. Remember cables and skirting boards are not on the menu!

We say a big NO to the muesli type rabbit food. They select the sweet naughty bits and leave the nutritious bits behind. Obese rabbits have a lot of

trouble grooming. This can result in a dirty bottom, the ideal conditions for flies to lay their eggs in and that is how 'Fly Strike' occurs within a matter of hours.

Rabbits in the wild are used to a complete diet of grass, grass and more grass. They don't entertain treats such as toast. You should keep this in mind when treating your bunny, just a small handful of veg a day is plenty and always make sure that what you feed your rabbit is rabbit friendly. Rabbits have a very sensitive digestive system.

Finally a rabbit should have a constant supply of clean fresh water. It is important to check their water supply at least twice a day and ensure that in winter the water does not freeze.

