

# Guidelines for Brushing

**You have begun your homecare routine and now want to start brushing your dog's teeth. Great Job!**

**Here are a few helpful hints to get you started and improve your dog's dental health.**

- 1) Start out by gently massaging your dog's muzzle and lips. Make this a fun time and allow them and you to get comfortable with this action and being handled around their face. Always reward after with a treat, game, toy, etc. You can also plan this time to be before a meal, with the associated meal as their reward. If your dog is resisting, then try again later that day or the next day. You can proceed to the next step when you are both comfortable with the current step and there is no resistance. Always end on a positive note.



- 2) Once you are both comfortable with facial massages, then you can begin lifting the lips and gently rubbing the gums and teeth with your finger. Again make this a fun activity with lots of praise, love and rewards. We recommend that you gently hold the muzzle closed to expose the outside surfaces of the teeth. Do not attempt to open your dog's mouth. Most dogs will not allow the interior surface of their teeth to be brushed, and that is ok. Some dogs will eventually learn to accept this advanced brushing, which is strongly encouraged.



- 3) Once your dog is calm and accepts you gently rubbing their gums and teeth you may start to introduce a different texture around your finger. A moist piece of gauze square or soft makeup pad wrapped around your finger works well. Again gently massage the teeth and gums. If you want to introduce toothpaste at this time you can. Let your dog lick the toothpaste off your finger first to make sure they will enjoy the process. Use only toothpaste designed for pets, as human toothpaste can cause digestive issues.



- 4) Now is the time to introduce the toothbrush. A soft bristled toothbrush is recommended. There are specifically designed toothbrushes for your dog, but an adult or children's soft bristled toothbrush would also work. Before introducing the toothbrush into their mouth, place a small amount of the pet-safe toothpaste on the bristles of the toothbrush and let them lick it off. This will help associate the toothbrush with a positive reward. If your dog does not accept any toothpaste, you can still have excellent success with just a toothbrush alone.



- 5) Begin by brushing the canine teeth in gentle circular motions. Your dog may only allow you to brush for a couple of seconds, but that is ok. End on a positive note and try to increase the time next session. Work your way to the premolar and molar teeth. While gently holding the muzzle closed, you can concentrate on the exterior surfaces of the teeth and gums. It is best to save the front incisor teeth until the end, as this area is more sensitive for some dogs. You only need to spend 30 seconds to start and work up to 2 minutes of brushing. Holding the toothbrush at 45° to the tooth will ensure you are cleaning the crucial area below the gumline.



- Maintenance results are best seen with daily brushing, lasting 2 minutes. Less than 4 times a week will have little, if any, effect.
- Any soft bristled toothbrush will work, whether it is a veterinary, human adult or children's toothbrush.
- Remember you can associate brushing with mealtime using the meal as the reward. You can choose to brush your dog's teeth before breakfast/dinner to ensure less calories are consumed by eliminating extra treats.
- Once you have mastered the home care brushing routine, you can reward yourself knowing you are playing an important role in the health and wellness of your dog and their oral care.

