

# Blue Ravine News

YOUR PET'S HEALTH IS OUR CONCERN

Volume 23 Issue 1



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## February—Pet Dental Care

Everyone loves a nice white smile, including pet owners. However, dental care is more than just the cosmetic appeal of white teeth. Since the early 1900's the life span of pets has increased. This is partly due to increasing awareness of how important healthy teeth are to the overall health of cats and dogs. Every animal should have an examination of its mouth at its yearly physical exam. Dental tartar, fractured teeth, oral masses and cancers, and infections can all be present with little obvious clues to the owner. The pet may or may not show a change in how it eats or chews its food, and usually can't give signs of pain.

### Dental Disease

Dental disease starts with dental plaque, the film created when the sugars of the food are changed to a gelatinous goo by bacteria in the mouth. This quickly hardens into the mineral deposit called tartar. Tartar can harbor more bacteria than feces, and, if left, will pass bacteria into the bloodstream. The bacteria can lodge on the valves of the heart, spread to the kidneys and liver, and generally cause infection in many different areas of the body. Furthermore, tartar can detach the teeth from their sockets by breaking down the ligaments attaching the tooth. This is called periodontal disease. It leads to pain, exposes the roots of the teeth, and causes puffy swollen gums and a strong unpleasant odor.



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## Pet Dental Care

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### Dental Cleaning

Regular cleaning of the teeth, a thorough inspection under anesthesia, polishing the teeth and possibly radiographs of the teeth will allow a veterinarian to keep your pet's mouth in the best possible health. Anesthesia is important to allow the margin of the teeth under the gums to be appropriately cleaned and all surfaces, including inside and back teeth to be well visualized. The mouth is washed with an antiseptic. Then the tartar and plaque are removed with ultrasonic scaling. Next, the surface of the teeth is polished to prevent rough edges giving a place for new tartar to stick in the future. If there are damaged or loosened teeth found, your veterinarian might recommend removal. This can occur at the time of the cleaning or in the near future. (If the pet owner wants to pursue salvaging the tooth, crowns and root canals are available for pets at dental specialists). Your pet will go home later the same day after it is completely awake.

### At Home Care

Home dental care can help slow the progression of dental disease. It should occur regularly and before

tartar starts. Brushing your pet's teeth with a small soft toothbrush, or a finger brush or even wiping with a rough cloth (like a piece of gauze) every 2-3 days prevents plaque from turning into tartar. You can ask your veterinarian for tricks to help your pet accept this. Chewing on safe bones, like Nyla-bones and large rawhides can also help keep teeth clean, although there are some concerns with those items. Ask your veterinarian about their thoughts on chew toys as opinions may differ about these items. Finally, chew treats like Oravet or CET chews help keep teeth clean. Look for VOHC-approved products at [VOHC.org](http://VOHC.org)

A healthy, pain-free mouth can add years of quality life to your pet.

The AVMA is also an excellent resource when it comes to pet dentistry. If you have further questions about your pet's dental health, reach out to your vet. Call us at 916-984-0990.



# National Walk Your Dog Day/Week

**National Walk Your Dog Week** is in October, and **National Walking the Dog Day** is February 22nd; the importance of this beneficial bonding activity cannot be exaggerated. Going for a walk with your canine companion is beneficial every day of the year, but this is a great time to think about how you can make walks with your dog safer and more enjoyable for you both. Proper walking techniques minimize stress, and they make much easier to get out and enjoy a stroll with your pup. Keep reading to discover a few tips for waking your canine companion.

## Start with the Right Gear

The right gear makes all the difference when it comes to going on walks with your dog. If you've been using a retractable leash, ditch it. As veterinarians, we've seen far too many accidents and injuries caused by these leashes. A regular leash that doesn't exceed six feet in length is a much safer option. While retractable leashes give your dog more freedom, their length also makes controlling your dog more difficult. Plus, the locking mechanisms on these leashes sometimes disengage at the worst possible times — like when a dog is running toward oncoming traffic.

If you have a small dog, pairing the leash with a regular well-fitting collar should work well. Make sure you can fit two fingers between the collar and your dog's neck. If your pup is a puller, try using a harness instead. When fitting your dog for a harness, it should be snug enough that they can't slip out of it but not tight enough to restrict their airway or limit motion.

## Make Sure Your Pup Has Proper Identification

Your dog needs to wear ID tags every time they leave the house. Even if you're walking in a familiar area or staying on your own property, ensuring that your dog has proper ID boosts your chances of seeing your furry friend again if they get lost.

Since collars and tags can get lost or damaged, consider having your dog microchipped, too. Microchipping your dog provides a permanent form of identification, and we strongly recommend it for our patients. It's safe, quick, affordable, and can save you and your pet from a lot of heartache if they ever wander off.



## Teach Your Dog to Heel

Many dogs try to take the lead when walking. Being dragged down the sidewalk isn't much fun for you, though, and straining against a collar or harness isn't good for your dog. When your dog starts pulling ahead, firmly but gently bring them back while giving the "heel" command. Reward them with a treat when they walk calmly at your side. It takes some time and practice, but teaching your dog to heel makes walks more enjoyable for everyone involved.

If your dog just doesn't seem to be getting the hang of walking nicely on a leash, consider consulting with a trainer or behaviorist. Some pups require more instruction than others, but you can train nearly any dog to walk on a loose leash with patience and perseverance.

## Be Mindful of Other Dogs

Encountering other dogs is a common occurrence while walking. Meeting a friendly dog is an enjoyable experience, but facing an aggressive one can quickly make your walk take a tragic turn. Before taking your dog to a new location, go for a walk there by yourself and make a note of any potential problems.

Never approach a strange dog without approval from their owner. And keep in mind that dogs are very sensitive to unfamiliar situations. Even if your dog is usually friendly, they may react differently when face-to-face with a strange dog — especially an aggressive one. Keep your canine companion close to you, and when in doubt about how an interaction with another dog might go, avoid coming in contact with them.

## Always Pick Up After Your Pup

Picking up after your pup isn't fun, but it is basic etiquette. No one wants to step in what your dog left behind, and no homeowner wants to find surprises from your canine companion on their lawn. In some places, you could even face a hefty fine if you fail to clean up after your pet. Plus, leaving behind pet waste poses significant health concerns for people and other animals alike.

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Baby, it's still cold outside!

## National Walk Your Dog Day/Week

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It's unpleasant, but picking up after your dog is an essential part of pet parenthood. If cleaning up after your canine companion is something you struggle with, lots of pooper scoopers make the task a bit less gross.

### Give Your Dog Time to Sniff

Taking your dog for a walk isn't just about providing physical activity. It's also an opportunity to stimulate your dog's brain. Giving your dog some extra time to sniff around offers mental stimulation and makes walks even more enjoyable for your four-legged best friend.

Decide what areas are safe and appropriate for your dog to explore, and give them a few minutes to soak up all the smells. Sniffing gives your pup a ton of information and helps them keep up with what's going on in the neighborhood. Believe it or not, a good sniffing session helps your dog burn off excess energy, too. You might be surprised at just how tired your dog is after a good sniffing session compared to a quick walk without any sniff breaks. If you do a brisk walk in the morning to get to work on time, make sure you try and leave time for sniffing in the evening. Your dog will appreciate it!

### Seek Advice from Your Dog's Veterinarian

Veterinarians aren't just there to help with vaccinations or when your dog feels under the weather. They're also here to help you be the best pet parent possible. Whether you struggle to get your canine companion to walk nicely on a leash, you aren't sure how much daily exercise your dog needs, or you have any other questions about caring for your dog, they'd be more than happy to help. Give Blue Ravine Animal Hospital a call today to schedule an appointment.

## BLUE RAVINE OFFICE HOURS

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 6:00 pm; Saturday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; Sunday, closed.  
For emergencies outside regular office hours, please call MarQueen Pet Emergency & Specialty, 916 757-6600  
or Sacramento Veterinary Referral Center, 916 362-3111.

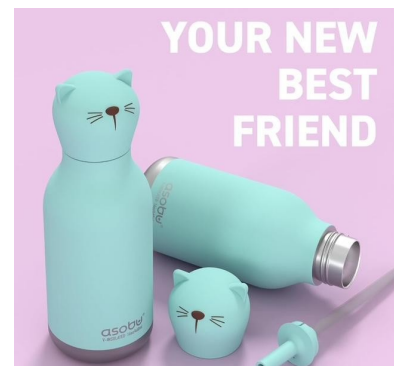
[www.blueravineanimalhospital.com](http://www.blueravineanimalhospital.com)

### March Coupon

**NexGard 12 months with HeartGard 12 months —  
\$40 off**

**NexGard Plus 12 months — \$105 off**

**Purchase 6 months of the NexGard Combo,  
\$20 off; or 12 months, \$50 off. Both will receive a  
free Bestie Bottle (\$50 value).**



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