

# Blue Ravine News

**YOUR PET'S HEALTH IS OUR CONCERN**

**Volume 22 Issue 1**



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## February—The Importance of Pet Dental Health

According to the American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS), after they reach the age of three, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats will manifest some form of dental disease. This can be easily prevented with regular checkups and visits to the veterinary clinic. Home monitoring is of great importance, too.

Pet dental problems can lead to serious health issues. Common problems such as gum disease, bad breath, and tartar buildup can cause pain and discomfort if left untreated. Our veterinarians perform a Comprehensive Oral Health Assessment and Treatment (COHAT) plan, a thorough assessment of your pet's oral cavity during their dental appointment. The plan includes a thorough review of the entire patient, a complete blood panel, and



anesthesia/radiographs, prior to scaling and polishing the teeth. Your veterinarian will also outline and discuss any additional treatments that are needed.

### The Most Common Symptoms of Dental Disease in Pets

- Red and swollen gums
- Brown or grey teeth

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# February—The Importance of Pet Dental Health

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- **Bad breath**
- **Bleeding gums**
- **Pawing the face or rubbing the mouth against objects**
- **Reluctance towards hard food or hard toys**

Home monitoring for dental care should include feeding high-quality food and natural pet treats, such as those recommended by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC): rawhide chews, chew treats, Greenies, and veterinary approved foods. Dogs have a natural urge to chew, so chew snacks can help with the natural scaling of tartar on the teeth. Other advice includes being careful of worn-out toys because they can be hazardous, and to brush your pet's teeth.



## How Often Should You Brush Your Pet's Teeth?

A pet's teeth should be brushed at least once a week! At first, your dog or cat will not like this process because it is strange to them. But with positive reinforcement and calming treats for cats or calming treats for dogs afterward, they will learn that there is nothing scary about brushing their teeth.

By not brushing your pet's teeth, you allow a build-up of bacteria, food leftovers, and saliva to collect between the teeth and the gums and to progress into a tartar buildup. With time, this can advance into a pet periodontal disease which will result in bad breath, bleeding gums, infection, inflammation, and pain.

## How to Brush a Dog's Teeth

To assist your dog's dental health with brushing start by getting the right tools for the job. You

may need to use different tools such as a finger brush for small dogs or a longer-handled toothbrush with softer bristles for large dogs. It's important to use toothpaste specifically designed for dogs, as they have a different pH than humans and may be toxic. You can acclimate your pet to brushing by first using your finger in it's mouth. Then gently progress to the brush.



## Cats

Some of the most common dental diseases in cats are gingivitis, feline stomatitis, broken teeth, retained baby teeth (also in dogs), malocclusion in cats and dogs (incorrect bite), and FORL (Feline Oral Resorptive Lesions).

Brushing your cat's teeth regularly is an important part of their overall dental hygiene and health.

Here are some tips to help make brushing your cat's teeth more successful:



1. Make sure you use a cat-formulated toothpaste. Toothpaste for humans can contain ingredients that are toxic to cats if swallowed.
2. Try brushing your cat's teeth once a day, preferably after the last meal of the day for consistency.
3. Start slowly and reward your feline with cat treats and praise when they cooperate during brushing sessions.

With patience and consistency, you can make cleaning your cat's teeth a part of their regular grooming routine. This will help keep them healthy for years to come.

If you have any questions or concerns about your pet's dental health, be sure to talk to a Blue Ravine Animal Hospital veterinarian for tips and advice.

# Important Preventive Health Care for Dogs and Cats

My pet's perfectly healthy! Why should I see my veterinarian?

Veterinarians urge us to bring our pets in for a checkup once or twice a year, even if they're in apparently perfect health. This may seem puzzling to some of us. Why should we bring our pets to the veterinarian and pay for a visit if they are looking and feeling fine?

It's actually really important to have your pet examined, blood work and all, at least once a year. Why? Think about it: as humans age, checkups become more and more im-

portant in order to monitor for conditions that become more common with aging. The same goes for your pet. What's more, even though your pet may appear healthy, he or she might be sick without you even knowing about it. Pets can't talk (obviously), so they can't tell you how they're feeling. Through instinct, they are also very good at compensating and hiding detectable signs or symptoms of disease from us. The following **Screenings Guideline** is a list of things your veterinarian will check and health risks that can be screened for:

Location in the body	Potential health risk	Possible results
Teeth and mouth	Gingivitis, periodontal disease and cancer	Oral pain, tooth abscesses, tooth loss, systemic infection, cancer progression
Liver	Inflammatory liver disease, toxic reaction to certain drugs, cancer, Cushing's syndrome	Jaundice, liver failure, anemia, bleeding disorder, cancer progression, death
Kidney	Acute and chronic kidney diseases	Irreversible kidney damage, kidney failure, high blood pressure, blindness, anemia, death
Heart and lungs	Heart muscle disease, leaky heart valves, irregular heart rhythm, heart worm disease, bronchitis	Poor circulation, fluid buildup in lungs or belly, congestive heart failure, pneumonia, sudden death
Joints and bones	Arthritis, hip dysplasia, torn cruciate, ligament in knee, degenerative back disease, cancer	Pain, reduced mobility, progressive disease, paralysis
Glands/endocrine	Diabetes, thyroid disease, adrenal disease	Cataracts, blindness, wasting, hair coat changes, hair loss, skin infections, collapse, death
Eyes and vision	Corneal ulcers, cataracts, dry eye, glaucoma	Pain, progressive blindness, loss of eye
Digestive/gastrointestinal system	Intestinal parasites, other intestinal infections, inflammatory bowel disease, colitis, pancreatitis, cancer	Inability to absorb nutrients from food, wasting, abdominal pain, cancer progression, death
Skin	Allergies, fleas, mites, ticks, lumps, skin infections, ear infections	Hair loss, tick-borne infections, worsening infections, hearing loss

## Age Matters

It's important to get that first veterinary visit under your belt. With a new puppy or kitten, your veterinarian will look for any signs of illness or disorder, and will perform a variety of other tests to make sure your new pet starts off on the right foot. Your pet will also be given appropriate vaccines.

Your veterinarian recommends pre-anesthetic blood work for a pet before a routine spay or neuter; this is often the first opportunity to establish baseline laboratory values to

see what's normal for your pet. In future visits, subtle changes from these established baselines may be the first indication of developing disease. Early disease detection and prevention is paramount to improve the quality and length of our pets' lives. It's important that younger pets, even those that appear to be in perfect health, have yearly exams.

The same goes for older pets – yearly to twice yearly physical exams and blood tests allow your veterinarian to look

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for any deviations in your pet's baseline laboratory values that may detect early developing disease when it is most treatable. You never know, a slight limp or an abnormal spike in blood glucose could mean your pet is developing conditions such as arthritis or diabetes, two conditions you may not be able to detect on your own. In older pets, your veterinarian will also want to screen for thyroid disorders (hyperthyroidism in cats and hypothyroidism in dogs). For animals with certain clinical signs, radiographs and other imaging studies may lead to the crucial early diagnosis of conditions like heart disease, lung disease, and even cancer.

### The Importance of a Yearly Physical Exam and Blood Work for Your Dog

An annual physical exam and blood work are a vital part of maintaining a healthy, happy, and long life for your dog. Since dogs age faster than people do and can't communicate when they are not feeling well, your veterinarian will gain valuable insights into the health of your dog and the opportunity to catch illnesses early.

### The Importance of a Yearly Physical Exam and Blood Work for Your Cat

The same is true for cats: Annual physical exams and blood work are a vital part of catching and addressing disease and illness in their early stages.

Cats age faster than people as well and can't talk to us. These tests will give your veterinarian better insights into your cat's health. Make your appointment now—call 916-984-0990.



Happy Groundhog Day!



Baby, it's cold outside!

## 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)

### February Coupon

**Free 14 count OraVet chews with dental cleaning**  
(Appointment required; valid through April 30)  
and/or

**Free plush toy with OraVet 30 count purchase during the month of February**  
(while supplies last)



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