

PETS

Toothbrush could cure bad pet breath

Animals also need brushing at home, regular checkups.

By SUE MANNING
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Dogs and cats can't brush, spit, gargle or floss on their own. So owners who want to avoid bad pet breath will need to lend a hand.

"Brushing is the gold standard for good oral hygiene at home. It is very effective, but some dogs and more cats don't appreciate having something in their mouth," said Dr. Colin Harvey, a professor of surgery and dentistry in the Department of Clinical Studies for the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine.

The bulk of bad breath odor — the trademark rotten egg smell — comes from hydrogen sulfide, which is waste from anaerobic bacteria that thrive without oxygen in places like gaps between teeth and gums. Plaque buildup also invites the bacteria and as the accumulation grows, so does the smell.

Animal shelters and rescues know bad breath and filthy teeth can be a deal breaker. Some shelters, such as the Humane Society of Vero Beach & Indian River County in Florida, shuffle their charges through a dental health program before the animals are adopted out.

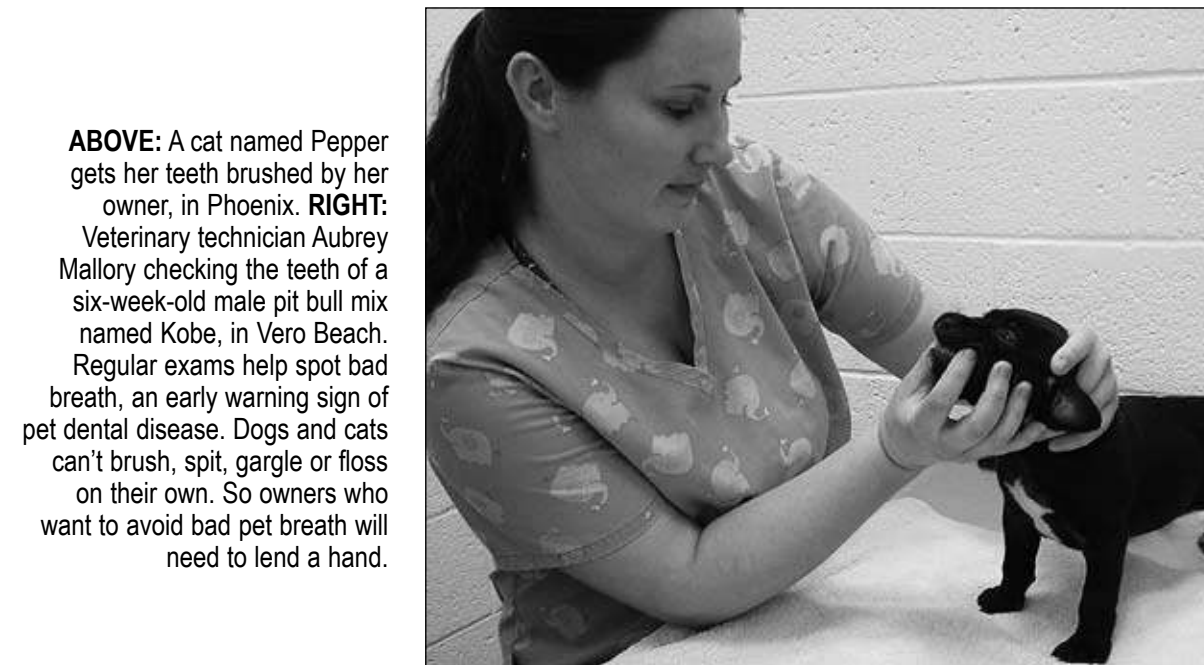
"We usually do dental cleanings and extractions when animals are spayed or neutered so the animal doesn't have to be put under anesthesia again after adoption and the adopter has one less thing to worry about," said Janet Winikoff, the shelter's director of education.

If a pet is already spayed or neutered, it will still get dental care before adoption, she said. Harvey added that bad breath could also be a symptom of an underlying medical problem.

Stacy Silva, Santa Barbara County Animal Services' community outreach coordinator, noted that wear on teeth could give the wrong impression of an animal's age. "(The animals) may look a lot older than their



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ABOVE: A cat named Pepper gets her teeth brushed by her owner, in Phoenix. RIGHT: Veterinary technician Aubrey Mallory checking the teeth of a six-week-old male pit bull mix named Kobe, in Vero Beach. Regular exams help spot bad breath, an early warning sign of pet dental disease. Dogs and cats can't brush, spit, gargle or floss on their own. So owners who want to avoid bad pet breath will need to lend a hand.

teeth, and it may just be a matter of cleaning the tartar off that gets them back looking their age and that helps them to be adopted," said Silva.

The animals that need a cleaning get chew toys or ropes, hard treats or cookies and a prescription diet if the vet orders it, she said.

Harvey, who has been director of the Veterinary Oral Health Council since it was founded in 1970, said such products are good substitutes for a teeth-brushing. Pet owners can try a combina-

tion or use other products such as water additives, chew toys, plaque and tartar cleaners, and dental diets, Harvey said.

Puppies and kittens are born toothless. They get their baby teeth before they're a month old, lose them three to five months later and get their permanent teeth by age 1. Dogs have 42 teeth and cats have 30.

Toy dogs tend to have more dental problems because breeding for their smaller size hasn't caught up with evolution, Harvey said. "Primitive dogs had a stan-

dard size and shape because they were evolved from wolves" but for toy breeds, their jaw size was reduced and tooth size was not, "so their teeth are too large for their mouths," he added.

Christie Keith, a communications consultant to animal welfare and veterinarian groups, said she spends about two minutes each night brushing the teeth of her three dogs after dinner. The Davisburg, Mich., resident believes most dog owners needlessly fear brushing their dogs' teeth.

"But cats are another story," she added.

Harvey said that's because cats' mouths are smaller, their teeth sharper and they could care less about bonding with a human during designated tooth time.

Keith said she took it slow when she began brushing the teeth of her 8-year-old greyhound Val. She started with one tooth at a time and used a foamless flavored gel that dogs can swallow.

"She started to nibble (on the toothbrush) and I rubbed it on her front teeth. I didn't make a big deal out of it. I didn't worry about brushing the first half dozen times. It was just a little bonding thing. Eventually, I brushed one tooth. Now she stands there and lets me brush all her teeth," she said.

The gel doesn't require water to rinse, lessening the likelihood of a mess. A year later, "(Val's) gums look healthy to me, and it doesn't seem she has any more tartar," Keith said.

Oral care products for animals are generally not regulated by any federal agency, although the Food and Drug Administration monitors all products that claim to prevent or slow disease. The agency does not test products that claim cleaner teeth, fresher breath or the reduction of plaque and tartar, Harvey said.

The VOHC is not a regulatory agency but it uses American Dental Association guidelines to test pet plaque and tartar products. Test requests are voluntary but companies pay nonrefundable submission and annual maintenance fees. Products are given a VOHC seal if they pass.

The council has approved a human, ADA-compliant, flathead toothbrush with soft bristles and rounded tips for pet use. A child's brush can be used for small pets and an adult size for big dogs, but don't use human toothpaste on pets, Harvey warned.

Such toothpastes contain detergents that foam and pets will swallow it instead of spitting it out, he said.

Harvey said he can't comment on any product VOHC hasn't tested, but as a rule, any wipe, tongue cleaner or additive should be beneficial — although nothing beats brushing.

Super Bowl Party Idea

Sweet, sticky ribs for the game

By ALISON LADMAN
Associated Press

The day of the big game calls for big, stick-to-your-ribs grub.

So we went with that as a theme, creating a recipe for boneless beef short ribs that are inspired by all the sweet and sticky goodness of Chinese-style pork ribs. To keep you in front of the television instead of the stove, we kept the recipe simple. Start by dumping everything in a bowl to marinate. When you're ready to cook, transfer it to a baking sheet and pop it in the oven. Done.

To make sure the ribs are meltingly tender, they cook low and slow while you watch the first half of the game. They should be good to go right around half-time. And if beef isn't your thing, the same approach will work with pork ribs and chicken wings (though you'll need to adjust the cooking time).

Sweet and sticky, tender short ribs

The servings indicated are for appetizer portions. If the friends gathered around the game are hearty eaters, or this is to be served as a main course, plan accordingly.

Start to finish: 1 1/2 hours (plus marinating)
Servings: 12

Ingredients

1/2 cup hoisin sauce
1/2 cup rice vinegar
1/2 cup low-sodium soy



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Sweet and sticky, slow-cooked short ribs, served on skewers for easy munching, will be a big hit with hungry fans who can't tear themselves away from all the Superbowl action.

sauce
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon five-spice powder
2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
3 cloves minced garlic
3 pounds boneless beef short ribs, cut into long, thin strips (1/4 inch thick by 1 inch wide)

Instructions

In a medium bowl, whisk together the hoisin, rice vinegar, soy sauce, brown

sugar, red pepper flakes, five-spice powder, sesame oil and garlic. Reserve 1/2 cup of the mixture in a small bowl. Add the short ribs to the original mixture and toss to thoroughly coat. Cover the bowl and refrigerate at least 8 hours, or overnight.

When ready to cook, heat the oven to 275 F. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with foil and place a rack over each pan.

Arrange the short ribs on the rack and bake for 45 to 60 minutes, or until tender. Brush the ribs with

the reserved 1/2 cup of marinade and increase the oven temperature to 450 F. Return to the oven and cook for another 10 minutes, or until browned and caramelized. Thread a skewer through each piece of meat to serve.

Nutrition information per serving: 270 calories; 130 calories from fat (48 percent of total calories); 14 g fat (5 g saturated); 0 g trans fats; 65 mg cholesterol; 11 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 8 g sugar; 23 g protein; 650 mg sodium.

Food allergy now legally listed as medial disability

By MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — People with severe food allergies have a new tool in their attempt to find menus that fit their diet: federal disabilities law. And that could leave schools, restaurants and anyplace else that serves food more vulnerable to legal challenges over food sensitivities.

A settlement stemming from a lack of gluten-free foods available to students at a Massachusetts university could serve as a precedent for people with other allergies or conditions, including peanut sensitivities or diabetes. Institutions and businesses subject to the Americans With Disabilities Act could be open to lawsuits if they fail to honor requests for accommodations by people with food allergies.

Colleges and universities are especially vulnerable because they know their students and often require them to eat on campus, Eve Hill of the Justice Department's civil rights division says. But a restaurant also could be liable if it blatantly ignored a customer's request for certain foods and caused that person to become ill, though that case might be harder to argue if the customer had just walked in off the street, Hill says.

The settlement with Lesley University, reached last month but drawing little attention, will require the Cambridge, Mass.,

institution to serve gluten-free foods and make other accommodations for students who have celiac disease. At least one student complained to the federal government after the school would not exempt the student from a meal plan even though the student couldn't eat the food.

"All colleges should heed this settlement and take steps to make accommodations," says Alice Bast, president and founder of the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness. "To our community this is definitely a precedent."

People who suffer from celiac disease don't absorb nutrients well and can get sick from the gluten found in wheat, rye and barley. The illness, which affects around 2 million Americans, causes abdominal pain, bloating and diarrhea, and people who have it can suffer weight loss, fatigue, rashes and other problems. Celiac is a diagnosed illness that is more severe than gluten sensitivity, which some people self-diagnose.

Ten years ago, most people had never heard of celiac disease. Awareness exploded in recent years, for reasons that aren't entirely clear. Some researchers say it was under-diagnosed, others say it's because people eat more processed wheat products like pastas and baked goods than in past decades, and those items use types of wheat that have a higher gluten content.