



## Alabama Veterinary Medical Association

P.O. Box 3514, Montgomery, AL 36109 334.395.0086 Fax: 334.270.3399

*Protecting People, Pets and Livestock - Yesterday, Today and Always.*

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Pet Dental Health Month, Bad Breath Could Mean Bad Health**

January 26, 2016

**FOR RELEASE** February 1, 2016

**Montgomery, Ala.** - The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association wants to remind pet owners that healthy teeth are just as important for your pet as for you. If your pet has bad breath, it could be a sign of a much more serious condition. Preventive veterinary dental care can save your pet from suffering and save you money in the long run. Pet Dental Health Month, sponsored by the American Veterinary Medical Association every February, reminds pet owners that brushing their pet's teeth is good for both your pet's health and your budget.

"Bad breath in pets is almost always a sign of a more serious infection," says ALVMA President Dr. T.C. Branch. "Infection caused by gum disease can be life threatening. If left untreated, it can spread to vital organs including the heart and kidneys. Periodontal disease can be painful, dangerous and expensive. If your pet has discolored teeth and bad breath, a visit to your veterinarian is highly recommended to avoid more serious health consequences."

Most dental disease occurs below the gum line, where it's hard to see. According to the AVMA, a 2013 analysis conducted by VPI Pet Insurance states the average cost to prevent dental disease in pets is one third the cost of treatment. AVMA states oral disease is the most frequently diagnosed health problem for pets. The American Veterinary Dental Society reports 80% of dogs and 70% of cats suffer from some form of oral disease by age 3.

While regular dental checkups are essential to help maintain your pet's dental health, there are a number of signs that dental disease has already started. If you notice any of the symptoms below, take your pet into your veterinarian immediately:

- Red swollen gums and brownish teeth.
- Loose teeth or teeth covered in tarter.
- Bad breath—Most pets have breath that is less than fresh, but if it becomes truly repugnant, similar to the smell of a rotten egg, it's a sign that periodontal disease has already started.
- Your pet shies away from you when you touch the mouth area.
- Drooling. Bleeding from the mouth.
- Frequent pawing or rubbing at the face and/or mouth.
- Reluctance to eat hard foods—for example, picking it up and then spitting it out.
- Loss of appetite or loss of weight (this combination can result from diseases of many organs, and early veterinary examination is important).

There has been a trend in anesthesia free cleaning, often offered by individuals untrained in veterinary dental techniques. The American Veterinary Dental College states that in the United States and Canada, only licensed veterinarians can practice veterinary medicine, which includes veterinary surgery, medicine and dentistry. Anyone providing dental services other than a licensed veterinarian, or a supervised and trained veterinary technician, is practicing veterinary medicine without a license and is not qualified to do so.

Preventive care is the best way to keep your pet healthy. With a little encouragement, you can teach your pet to accept having their teeth brushed. There are also many products that promote healthy dental care for pets including chews, treats and certain foods designed to reduce plaque. Be careful with the type of products you give your pet. Bones, antlers, hooves and some nylon products are too hard and can cause pets to break their teeth. Flexible chew toys are recommended. Some pet treats may also cause tooth problems. Many have bad ingredients like corn syrup which can cause decay. They are often high in fat, sugar and preservatives, and loaded with calories. Try offering healthy treats like carrots or green beans. The Veterinary Oral Health Council has a list of recommended products to aide with tarter and plaque listed on their website at <http://www.vohc.org>. Many veterinarians offer specials on dental cleaning fees during the month of February. Visit the ALVMA website at <http://www.alvma.com> for more information on Pet Dental Health Month and for additional resources and links.

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 700 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting People, Pets and Livestock – Yesterday, Today and Always.

-30-

**Media Inquiries:**

**Linda Tynan**

Director of PR & Communications  
Alabama Veterinary Medical Association  
334.395.0086 • fax 334.270.3399

[ltynan@franzmgt.com](mailto:ltynan@franzmgt.com)  
[www.alvma.com](http://www.alvma.com)

More information is available at the AVMA website.

<https://www.avma.org/Events/pethealth/Pages/February-is-National-Pet-Dental-Health-Month.aspx>