



# TAKING CARE OF *Toto's Teeth*

**VETERINARY DENTIST DR. JAMES ANTHONY EXPLAINS WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU BRING YOUR PET FOR AN ORAL HYGIENE PROCEDURE AT THE WCVM VETERINARY TEACHING HOSPITAL.**

*Interview by Adrienne Thomas, Media Group*

- **PHYSICAL FIRST:** First, we do a full physical on the animal, checking from nose to tail to ensure that everything is normal. We check the heart and lungs, and we often do blood tests as well as chest X-rays to ensure that the animal can safely go under anesthetic. Once the animal is deemed safe to receive anesthetic, we ask that your pet is fasted the night before — usually no food after 7 p.m. and no water after midnight. Usually we ask the owner to bring the pet at 8 a.m. the next day.

- **PRE-PROCEDURE PREPWORK:** After shaving the pet's front leg, we insert an intravenous catheter and hook your pet up to intravenous fluids. Then we do another physical on the animal to ensure that the animal is safe and to create an anesthetic protocol that meets the individual needs of the animal. This protocol is designed based upon the information learned from the blood work, the chest X-ray, and, more importantly, the physical exam.

- **SLEEP TIME:** We usually give some pre-anesthetic drugs to make the animal calmer and then we give some intravenous anesthetic to put the animal under and make it sleepy. We then place an endotracheal tube into the throat and give the animal gas. Because in dentistry we use a lot of fluids such as water to flush things, this tube is designed so that the tip expands slightly,

fitting snugly into the throat and preventing any water and debris from getting into the lungs during the procedure.

- **A BETTER LOOK INSIDE:** Once the tube is in place, we do full-mouth dental X-rays that tell us about any hidden lesions and help us to determine whether the gums, the bone, and the teeth are healthy. These X-rays are used to determine what treatment is required. Then we do a physical exam in the mouth, probing all around the teeth and checking the gums. We look underneath the tongue, in the back of the throat and at the tonsils to check for any little growths, lacerations, excess tissue, ulcers, and so on.

- **SCALING STAGE:** The next step is scaling the teeth. We first rinse the mouth to decrease its bacterial content, and then we use a *scaler* — a vibrating tip that vibrates the calculus off the tooth. We follow that up with hand scalers and then a curette which scrapes beneath the gum line. If no further treatment is required to the gums, we then polish the teeth with a pumice and apply fluoride. We wake up the animal and send it home, asking to see it again in two weeks. At that time, we check to see that healing has occurred, and we then customize the home-care program so that we don't have to do this procedure again. **V**



Cameraman Mark Utley of Media Group films Dr. James Anthony as he gives teeth brush tips for pet owners. Animal health technologist April Penner assists while second-year veterinary student Amanda Laycock looks on.

# TIME TO BRUSH

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Brush your pet's teeth very gently at first; begin with just a little stroke to get them used to it. After about two weeks of daily brushing, you can brush as hard as you would brush your own teeth.

The following process for cleaning should take only 30 to 60 seconds, and that's all that is needed on a daily basis:

- Put a small amount of toothpaste on the brush.

- Being gentle, put your hand on top of the head, reach over the lips and lift the lips up showing the back teeth.
- Put the brush at a 45 degree angle to the tooth and gum.
- Go back and forth using a horizontal motion and doing both the top and the bottom.
- Repeat the same process with the front teeth and then with the teeth on the other side.
- Follow up with love and affection.
- You don't have to open the animal's mouth; having it closed is fine. Plus, you don't need to worry about brushing the inside of the teeth as 96 per cent of all oral pathology is found on the outside. **V**

*Vet Topics thanks Adrienne Thomas of Saskatoon's Media Group for providing her complete interview with Dr. James Anthony of WCVM to develop this issue's pet health management articles on oral health care.*