

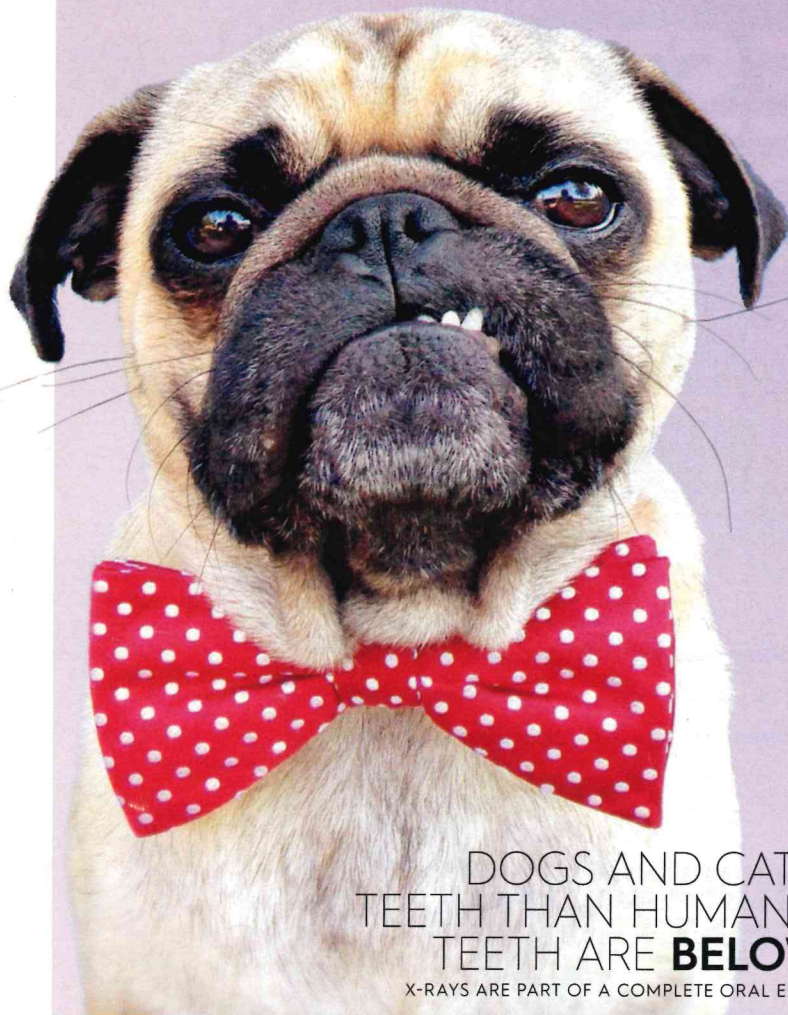
happy *teeth*

Your pet's dental health is as important as your own. Just like in humans, plaque buildup causes gum disease. Brush up on how to keep your pet's chompers in good shape.

BRUSH DAILY

“Plaque builds up the same way in animals as it does in people,”

says Jan Bellows, D.V.M., president of the Foundation for Veterinary Dentistry. Ideally, you'd brush dogs' and cats' teeth daily to remove the plaque, but because that's challenging (to say the least), try rubbing their teeth with gauze that has a dab of pet toothpaste like Petsmile, OK'd by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). Or try wipes with dental cleaners in them. For cats, an easier technique: Dip a cotton-tipped applicator in tuna juice and rub it on their teeth. “Creating friction is important to rub the plaque away,” Bellows says.



GET A VET CHECK

“Your pet's teeth should be cleaned once a year,” veterinarian Jan Bellows says.

Although a cleaning requires general anesthesia, dental disease is more problematic. But make sure your vet examines your pet first and tailors the anesthesia to her.

ADD DENTAL-FRIENDLY TREATS

Check the VOHC website (vohc.org) for products that have been vetted to help improve pets' dental health. In addition, if your dog is a good chewer and doesn't gulp, rawhide that has the antiseptic chlorhexidine can help control plaque. But make sure it's made in America because of toxicity concerns. Avoid real bones, nylon bones, and elk antlers, all of which can fracture teeth, Bellows says.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

1

MAXIGUARD ORAL CLEANSING WIPES

These wipes are textured to help create friction to remove plaque. Find stores at addisonlabs.com.

2

DENTAL CRUNCH CAT SNACKS FROM PURINA PRO PLAN

The texture acts like a toothbrush to help prevent the buildup of tartar (hardened plaque). proplan.com

3

C.E.T. VEGGIEDENT TARTAR CONTROL CHEWS

The shape works with the way a dog chews so it gets around teeth. Find stores at us.virbac.com. ■

DOGS AND CATS HAVE LONGER TEETH THAN HUMANS, SO MORE OF THEIR TEETH ARE **BELOW THE GUM LINE.**

X-RAYS ARE PART OF A COMPLETE ORAL EXAM TO CATCH ISSUES IN THE EARLY STAGES.