

STILLWATER, Okla.—In celebration of National Pet Dental Health Month, the Oklahoma State University Center for Veterinary Health Sciences wants you to know the importance of oral health for your pets.

Oral health is an important part of your animal's overall good health. The American Veterinary Dental Society (AVDS) recommends that your pet receives regular, professional dental care from your veterinarian as well as care from you at home.

Here are three basic steps the AVDS suggests you follow:

1. Take your pet to the veterinarian for a dental exam.
2. Begin a dental care regime at home.
3. Schedule regular veterinary checkups to monitor progress of your pet's dental health routine.

A veterinarian can suggest dental health care such as brushing your pet's teeth with toothpaste made for animals. Do not use people toothpaste.

Another effective method is feeding specially formulated foods proven effective in combating plaque and tartar buildup. The Seal of Acceptance from the Veterinary Oral Health Council, an organization started by the AVDS, appears on products that meet defined standards for plaque and tartar control in dogs and cats.

Don't wait for your pet's annual checkup if you think there is a problem. Signs of oral and dental diseases in dogs and cats include: bad breath, loose teeth or teeth covered in tartar, your pet shies away when you touch its mouth area, drooling or dropping food from the mouth, bleeding from the mouth, or loss of appetite or weight.

The OSU Veterinary Center includes the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. The Small Animal Clinic located within the Hospital is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Community practice clinicians encourage their clients to maintain a dental healthcare program for all patients.