(Stillwater, Okla., January 31, 2013) – February is National Pet Dental Health Month – does your pet have healthy teeth? Veterinarians at Oklahoma State University's Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital encourage pet owners—especially of dogs, cats, small exotic mammals, and horses—to provide regular dental checkups for their animals.

"Bad breath in a dog or cat can be an indication of a more serious issue, which could damage teeth or gums or even lead to internal organ damage," explains Dr. Paul DeMars, Community Practice Clinician at OSU's veterinary hospital. "Oral health is vital to the overall health of animals."

"Often people may not think of oral care for exotic pets," says Dr. Cornelia Ketz-Riley, head of OSU's Avian, Exotic and Zoo Medicine Service at the veterinary hospital. "Rabbits, Guinea pigs and chinchillas have permanently growing teeth and need adequate diet, especially hay, for proper tooth wear. They often have dental problems that quickly could become a life-threatening situation. And ferrets can have similar dental problems like dogs and cats and should get regular dental exams, as well."

OSU's veterinarians suggest three simple steps for best results:

- Take your pet to its veterinarian for a dental exam
- Brush your pet's teeth at home using approved veterinary dental products (do not use human toothpaste)
- Schedule regular veterinary medical checkups to monitor progress

Horses also need routine dental care as well. Dental disease is one of the leading causes of weight loss in horses. Unhealthy teeth can also lead to mouth pain and poor performance.

"A veterinarian should perform oral examinations every 6 months on horses starting at 1 ½ years of age until all the permanent teeth have erupted and annually thereafter," says Dr. Lyndi Gilliam, Equine Internal Medicine Clinician at OSU's veterinary hospital. "Early in a horse's life small corrections can be made to avoid major dental procedures in the future. Excellent dental care is a simple way to extend the life of your horse."

Start your animals on a healthy dental care program today. OSU's veterinary hospital is open to the public and is offering dental specials during the month of February. Call (405) 744-7000 for an appointment.

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Oklahoma State University is a modern land-grant university. OSU's Center for Veterinary Health Sciences is the only veterinary college in Oklahoma. One of 28 veterinary colleges in the United States, it is fully accredited by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The center's Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital is open to the public and provides routine and specialized care for small and large animals. It also offers 24-hour emergency care and is certified by the American Animal Hospital

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