Good oral health can lead to the overall health of your animals. Pets need regular professional dental care from a veterinarian as well as care at home from their owners.

For the best results, be sure pets (especially dogs, cats, exotic mammals and horses) have an annual dental checkup.

Dog and cat owners can ask their veterinarian to show them how to brush their pets' teeth at home using approved veterinary dental products. Never use human toothpaste to brush an animal's teeth.

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.

Oral care is important for exotic pets, too. 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 could quickly become a life-threatening situation.

Ferrets can have similar dental problems like dogs and cats and should also get regular dental exams.

Exotic mammal owners can take certain steps to familiarize their pet with the feel of medical instruments and with being handled by a veterinarian that will make their visit less stressful.

Horses need to have annual dental checkups as well. Dental disease is the leading cause of weight loss in horses. Unhealthy teeth can lead to a sore mouth and poor performance.

If noticed at an early age, 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.

Make dental care part of your pet’s daily regime. Be sure to include a dental checkup during your pet’s annual wellness visit at the veterinarian.

This column is provided by the faculty of the OSU Veterinary Medical Hospital. The large volume of questions does not allow us to directly respond to specific email questions so please watch for your answer in the column. Email your questions for the column to dvmoncall@postoffice.cvhs.okstate.edu
and watch for your answer.

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