

CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIELS TEETH and MOUTH CARE

Cavaliers need special attention to their teeth in order to avoid bad breath, tooth decay, tooth loss and possibly development of other health problems. Diseased gums and teeth can release bacteria into the blood stream and may play a part in some heart complications as well as affecting generalized health. Unfortunately Cavaliers tend to have small poorly rooted teeth that are susceptible to disease. There are ways to promote a healthy mouth.

- 1) FOOD: Feed a hard kibble rather than wet, semi moist or excessive/inappropriate table foods. Some premium brands now have product lines designed to help prevent tartar development. Iam's Eukanuba line of foods now promotes itself as having a superior dental "defense" system. Science Diet has carried special biscuits for dental health. This not intended to be an all-inclusive list but ideas on available products. If you wonder which is best for your Cavalier check with your veterinarian.*
- 2) TREATS: There are many products on the market designed to help teeth and breath. These items range from toys with fibers to "floss" the tooth surface, to grooved or bumpy surfaced rubber or nylon objects, to a whole array of tooth "healthful" edibles. I personally avoid very hard objects for fear of a cracked tooth. One product I have found to be very popular with the dogs is "Greenies". My dogs will wait by the cabinet on the chance they might be getting one. They are rather expensive for how quickly they are gobbled up but by buying in bulk through a catalog I have seen it as low as about \$0.36 per petite bone.*
- 3) BRUSHING: Brushing your dog's teeth regularly can make a big difference in tooth and gum health. Do NOT use human toothpaste. There are a variety of toothpastes on the market for dogs. I can not say I have a favorite beyond preferring one with chlorhexidine for bacteria if I am seeing any bleeding or inflamed gums. I will also use either chlorhexidine dental wash or toothpaste if I am scaling the teeth as this may cause some gum bleeding. (One source of this is the Foster & Smith catalog). Brushing does NOT take the place of a visit to the vet for significant teeth and gum problems that have already affected the mouth. If started when your dog is young, they get use to the process and do not put up much fuss. The more regularly you brush the better (daily), but even weekly or monthly will have benefit. Dog toothbrushes can be found in all sizes and designs. They come as pretty standard looking brushes, ones that fit on your finger, abrasive pads on a handle, wipes, and multisided bristles (my favorite).*
- 4) SCALING: It is possible to use a dental tool to scale your dogs teeth in the event of minor tartar build up. Scalars are available through the catalogs. It is not a process that everyone will be interested in doing. Care must be taken to avoid gum damage by either an uncontrolled dog or careless operator.*
- 5) ADDITIVES: Several commercial products are available to add to your pet's water to help with teeth and breath. The best known among show people is Oxyfresh pet oral hygiene solution. To the best of my knowledge it is helpful and safe provided you remember to use it - the biggest problem in my house. There are usually distributors at the bigger shows.*