

## Teaching your pet to chew

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The teeth and gums of dogs and cats are designed for tearing flesh and chewing on flesh and bones.

Unfortunately modern life prevents us from having our pets on a completely natural diet. To provide them with all the vitamins and minerals they need you must feed your pet a complete and balanced pet food, either canned, or dry, or both. On such a diet their teeth do not get cleaned daily by tearing flesh apart. Also their gums become soft and swollen and will recede if they do not have the daily massaging provided by a raw bone to chew upon.

Following are photos of a dog (Maltese) and cat (Siamese cross) mouth, before and after having the tartar cleaned off (under general anaesthetic) and the teeth polished.

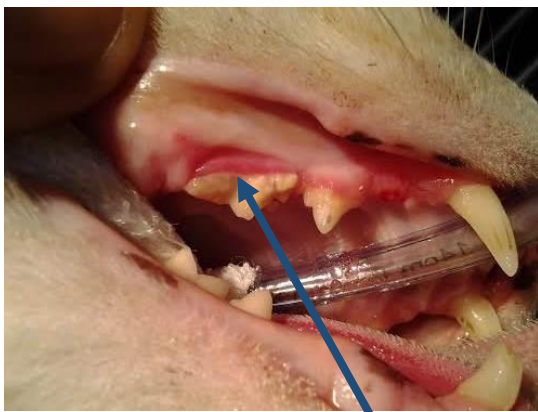


Yellow tartar on teeth.



The same teeth after cleaning & polishing

Cat's mouth prior to teeth cleaning



Notice the swollen sore gums.



The same teeth after cleaning & polishing.

So, to reduce the formation of tartar on your pet's teeth and to keep the gums strong and healthy, we recommend teaching your pet to chew on a little raw meat (on the bone if possible) every day.

For Cats:

- Ensure your cat has a strip of raw meat every day. If you eat meat yourself this may be a strip cut off your own dinner. Cut a strip off the edge of your steak or the edge of your chicken before you cook it (1/2cm thick by 20 cm long – like a thick spaghetti of meat – see the photos below). Put this meat strip into your cat's bowl for it to eat.
- If you have a kitten it is fairly easy to teach it to chew. They usually have good appetites when they are recently weaned.
- If you have an older cat which has not had access to raw meat in the past then you will have to change its habits - CATS ARE CREATURES OF HABIT!
  - Place a thin strip of meat on the bowl every night for dinner
  - If the meat is not eaten by the morning, throw it out
  - Repeat this every night for a month (YES a month!)
  - At first your cat may avoid the *scary* new thing in its bowl
  - Then it may play with the thing (dragging it around the house)
  - Eventually your cat becomes acclimatised to the meat and eats it. (Especially if you do not give any other food until the morning).
  - Try different meat types regularly to find out which your cat most enjoys.
  - If your cat is still not interested in eating meat after a month, call us for assistance.
- Once you have your cat chewing meat strips you may like to try a little meat on the bone, such as a chicken wing tips, chicken necks or fresh sardines.
- NEVER feed cooked bones of any sort.



Choose some fresh meat



slice strips off a long side



Strips are long and thin



Cut many strips and freeze laid flat

For Dogs:

- Newly weaned puppies normally have excellent appetites and can be trained to chew on a raw meaty bone as soon as they get home.
- For small breed puppies, start with a chicken neck or chicken wing tip.
- For larger breed puppies try a half a chicken wing or a baby lamb shank.
- Never feed odd shaped bones such as T-bones, vertebrae (back bones) or knuckle bones – they can stick in the throat and choke your dog. If you are unsure, don't feed that bone and give us a call.
- Do not buy a "bag of bones" from the butcher. This *lucky dip* of bones will often contain cut off knuckles, chop bones, short bits of rib and spine, and other completely unsuitable bones which your dog may attempt to swallow whole and he could choke.
- Always feed your dog a bone close by, so you can keep an eye on him. Very rarely the bone may get stuck in the back of the throat or the roof of the mouth, and you will need to pull it out.
- As your dog grows, the size of bone can get longer too – as he will enjoy the fun of slowly demolishing a bone. Examples are whole chicken wings for small breeds and baby lamb shanks or turkey wings for larger breeds.
- For giant breeds try veal shanks and veal and lamb shoulders. Notice that we always recommend young bones (veal, lamb, chicken, turkey) as they are soft and easily crushed. Do not be tempted to give your dog mutton and beef bones from older animals – the bones are rock hard.
- Lastly, **NEVER feed cooked bones of any sort**. Once the bone is cooked it becomes indigestible. These can splinter and cause perforations or obstructions in the gastrointestinal tract of your dog (a veterinary emergency).