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**What? You have to brush your ferret's teeth? You bet! A twice-monthly regimen can save on costly vet trips later and result in a longer and healthier life for your ferret.**

Ferrets have 40 adult teeth on which plaque can collect and calcify to form tartar if it's not removed. Like other pets, ferrets should have their teeth brushed regularly – veterinarians recommend every other week.

Although a diet of dry kibbled food can help clean teeth, softer food, treats, and sugary snacks will build up plaque, just like on our own teeth. Most ferrets enjoy “healthy” treats such as raisins, dates, and bananas, but the natural fruit sugars also harm teeth. So if your furry friends eat treats or softer foods, you may want to increase your brushing regimen to once a week.



Begin by purchasing a cat toothbrush or a package of sterile gauze. **Never use a human toothbrush!** Even the softest baby toothbrush is too hard for ferret

teeth and gums. There are several cat toothbrushes on the market that work quite well. For example, there is a kitten toothbrush that looks like a tiny standard bristle brush with an angled head, and a finger toothbrush made of soft latex-type material, with bristles that are of the same soft material, which fits over your index finger thimble style. This type of brush is gentler and gives you more control, but be careful if your ferret likes to chew rubbery things because he may try biting the brush!

There are a variety of flavored toothpastes for pets; your ferret will let you know if the toothpaste taste is agreeable to him. Pastes for cats work well, and ferrets often prefer the malt flavoring. These toothpastes are edible, so there is no need for rinsing and no fear of your ferret swallowing any! You'll learn quickly what your ferret likes. **The toothpaste you buy for yourself is not safe for the ferret. Do not use it under any circumstances.** Human toothpastes are too abrasive for ferrets and can actually cause tooth damage. Additionally, if your ferret swallows any toothpaste, he can get very sick!

Start by wetting the bristles of the toothbrush and apply a tiny amount of paste (a blob about the size of a drop of water). If you choose to use the gauze, simply wrap a thin layer of gauze

around your finger. You may wish to apply a drop or two of Ferretone on the toothbrush or gauze. This seems to be tolerable to the ferret and aids in its desire to cooperate. You may need to



scruff your ferret or have an assistant hold your ferret's head. Lift the gum area and begin cleaning the teeth with the gauze in a gentle motion. If using the toothbrush, be sure to brush thoroughly, keeping the pressure of the bristles light. Gently massage the gums and the canines (the long front “fangs”) and work back toward the molars. You should notice the buildup of treats and soft food items clean off easily. Especially work on the outside surfaces to help reduce the tartar buildup in the area that the tongue does not reach. Pay close attention to this area, so that tooth decay can be prevented. Tartar appears as a gray or green discoloration on the teeth. Your ferret will always have a small amount of tartar build-up.

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If there is an increase in tartar, you should be concerned and consult your veterinarian. Tartar can lead to tooth decay. Tooth decay is usually detected when the tartar color turns brown. If not taken care of, infection can set in causing your ferret pain that will stop him from eating.

Gums should be pink, smooth, and moist. If the gums are red, it's an indication of inflammation and disease. If they are white or gray, it is an indication that your ferret is extremely sick. If you see swelling of the gum over the tooth, your ferret has an abscess. Any of these problems need the quick attention of your veterinarian.

Taking good care of your ferret's teeth can protect your ferret from future dental problems. However, this can not take the place of regular check-ups with your veterinarian. Your vet can give a total and professional teeth cleaning, which we as ferret owners are not



equipped to do. When neglected, dental problems have been known to cause death. When the task of brushing is completed, remember to reward your fun loving ferret with praise and a treat. If you don't feel you can handle brushing your ferret's teeth, then be sure your ferret gets a check-up at least

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# How to Brush your Ferret's Teeth

