



How to Get to YES for Dentistry

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Meet your consultant



Wendy S. Myers, CVJ, owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Denver, Colorado. Her consulting firm helps teams improve telephone and communication skills, client service, and compliance. Communication Solutions for Veterinarians is a leader in phone-skills training. Wendy offers monthly CE credit webinars. She is a certified veterinary journalist and author of five books, including *101 Communication Skills for Veterinary Teams*. For five years, Wendy was a partner in an AAHA-accredited specialty and emergency hospital, which was sold to a corporate group. Wendy is a member of the American Animal Hospital Association and has been an instructor for AAHA's Veterinary Management School. She serves on a committee for the Foundation for Veterinary Dentistry.

What you'll learn

- Presenting the treatment plan at the time of diagnosis
- Using body language and visual aids to get clients to "yes"
- Explaining the consequences of not treating
- Confidently discussing financing, preventive care plans and pet insurance
- Scheduling the procedure today
- Calling clients when procedures aren't promptly scheduled
- Having medical progress exams one week after procedures to teach home care and set expectations for future professional dental care
- Creating reminders for future oral assessments
- Adopting best practices from the human dental profession

Understanding dental compliance and fees

Periodontal disease is the No. 1 health problem in small animals. Because patients show minimal outward clinical signs, therapy may not be initiated until late in the disease stage. Share these dental facts with your clients to help them understand the importance of professional and home dental care from Dr. Brook A. Niemiec, FAVD, Diplomate AVDC, of Southern California Veterinary Dental Specialties.¹

- By 2 years of age, 80% of dogs and 70% of cats have periodontal disease. Small and toy breed dogs are particularly susceptible.
- Even after teeth are completely cleaned, plaque forms on tooth surfaces within 24 hours.
- Lack of home care for one week can result in gingivitis in some patients; for three weeks, in all patients.
- One veterinary study found that pockets became reinfected within two weeks of a dental cleaning if home care was not performed.

Compliance for dental treatment is 38%, according to the 2009 AAHA study, "Compliance: Taking Quality Care to the Next Level."² Compliance was defined as animals with greater than or equal to Grade 2 that needed and received dental treatments. However, the study identified a recommendation gap. For 15% of pets with a diagnosis of Grade 2 to 4 dental disease, no recommendation for treatment was made.



The average dental case totals \$516, according the *AAHA Veterinary Fee Reference*, 10th edition (includes preanesthetic exam, CBC with differential, chemistry panel with eight chemistries, dental radiographs, 30 minutes anesthesia, IV catheter and placement, IV fluids, dental scaling and polishing, subgingival curettage, fluoride application, electronic monitoring, post-procedure pain medication, post-procedure injectable antibiotics, hospitalization, and one-week supply of antibiotics.).³ Because pets will need multiple dental procedures throughout their lifetimes, your team needs to confidently present treatment plans and get clients to accept professional dental care for pets.

Besides improving patients' health, you will improve practice health. Let's say your two-doctor practice has 3,600 active patients with 38% receiving dental treatments. If you grow compliance an additional 20% to 58%, the resulting revenue would be an estimated \$371,520 (720 additional procedures at \$516 each). Additional income could be generated with consumable home-care products.

The 2009 AAHA compliance study found eight forms of client education and communication to improve compliance:²

1. Providing written treatment plans
2. Providing printed educational material
3. Scheduling treatment before the client leaves the practice
4. Making follow-up calls if procedures are not scheduled
5. Sending postal and email reminders if no procedures are scheduled
6. Mailing educational information for follow-up
7. Printing the medical recommendation on today's invoice
8. Reviewing issues covered during the exam by a receptionist or other employee (repetition gets results)

Presenting the treatment plan at the time of diagnosis

Proactively present treatment when early dental disease is diagnosed rather than allowing the disease to silently progress.

Stages of periodontal disease⁴

0 = Normal gingiva

1 = Gingivitis, no bone loss

↑ Reversible ↑

↓ Irreversible ↓

2 = <25% periodontal bone loss

3 = 25% to 50% periodontal bone loss

4 = >50% periodontal bone loss

Engage pet owners in oral exams. Give a play-by-play description as you evaluate each of the four dental quadrants. Few pet owners look inside their pets' mouths. Point out dental calculus, gingivitis, tooth fracture, tooth resorptive lesion or missing teeth.

Bad breath is an early indicator of dental disease. To stress the fact that bad breath equals infection, take an audible deep breath during the oral exam. If you smell stinky breath, say, *"Wow, have you smelled your pet's bad breath? That means there is an oral infection."*

Advanced dental disease can have serious health consequences such as:

- Painful abscess



- Jaw becomes fragile and can fracture
- Toothache can cause the animal to eat less or not at all
- Bacteria passing through the bloodstream can cause problems with kidneys, lungs, heart and liver

Avoid wiggle words that kill acceptance. Convey the urgency and importance of professional care.

- “I recommend” implies that treatment is optional or not a necessity.
- “Think about” or “probably” encourages clients to delay pets’ treatments.
- “Let’s watch it for now.” What are you going to watch it do, graduate from Grade 1 to Grade 3, increasing the health consequences and cost of care?
- “Let’s wait until February.” During an onsite consultation at a veterinary hospital in November, I shadowed several preventive care exams. During one appointment, the veterinarian diagnosed Grade 2 dental disease in a 4-year-old dog and explained treatment. Then she destroyed client compliance by saying, “But let’s wait and schedule it for February because you can save \$50.” Although National Pet Dental Health Month is in February, you diagnose dental disease daily and should not have clients delay care.

The veterinarian would confidently say, “<Pet name> has Grade 1 dental disease. He needs a dental treatment now to slow the progression of his dental disease and to treat the infection. As his dental disease gets worse, serious health problems could happen. It’s common for pets to get painful abscesses or a toothache that causes them to eat less or not at all. Bacteria in the mouth passes through the bloodstream and can permanently damage the kidneys, heart, liver and lungs. A dental treatment will remove built up tartar and plaque. I will have my technician explain our 12 steps of a professional dental treatment and talk with you about easy home-care products.”

Create templates for Grade 1 to 4 dental treatments. Set up group codes in your practice-management software so there is consistency among doctors for dental fees. If you charge for anesthesia by weight, you would create Grade 1 to 4 templates for each weight class.

Have the order of services match the order of delivery. Treatment plans should reflect your optimal standard of care or “Plan A.” For example, include preanesthetic testing in all procedures. It’s hard to add services later if clients see an initial lower price and perceive that you’re upselling them. List every service, even if it is bundled into the overall cost or a no-charge item such as a complimentary nail trim.

Use client-friendly descriptions, avoiding medical jargon that may intimidate or confuse pet owners. You could list individual services and one total price so pet owners aren’t tempted to negotiate items. Without veterinary medical knowledge, a pet owner might question, “Can you do the dental procedure without anesthesia?”

If you have electronic medical records, use diagnostic codes and link codes to print appropriate dental treatment plans. For example, if the doctor enters “Grade 1 Dental Disease” as the diagnostic code, a Grade 1 Dental Treatment Plan would automatically print. This automation ensures that clients will receive written treatment plans every time disease is diagnosed. Clients need treatment plans at the time of diagnoses, so they can ask questions and then schedule at checkout. Discuss the need for treatment as well as fees in the privacy of an exam room—never at the front desk where financial conversations may be awkward and you’re competing with distractions. Clients may be less likely to schedule if given treatment plans on their way out the door.

Sample Canine Grade 2 Dental Treatment Plan

This treatment plan lists medical services to be performed on <patient name> and approximate costs of the procedure. Once your pet is under anesthesia, your veterinarian will perform a complete oral exam.



During this comprehensive oral exam, the doctor may find one or more teeth that need to be extracted for health reasons. Dental x-rays will be taken to get an accurate diagnosis of the condition of your pet's teeth above and below the gum line and jawbone. Your veterinarian or a technician will call you with an updated treatment plan if your pet needs oral surgery or additional services.

Procedure or dispensed item	Quantity	Cost	Fee
Grade 2 canine dental treatment, up to 25 lbs.	1	\$_____	\$_____
Preanesthetic exam	1	\$_____	\$_____
Preanesthetic blood panel	1	\$_____	\$_____
Preanesthetic pain-relief medication	1	\$_____	\$_____
Antibiotic injection	1	\$_____	\$_____
Anesthetic induction medication	1	\$_____	\$_____
Anesthesia (per half hour)	1.5	\$_____	\$_____
Surgical IV catheterization with fluids	1	\$_____	\$_____
Continuous heart monitoring	1	\$_____	\$_____
Continuous pulse oximetry	1	\$_____	\$_____
Continuous blood-pressure monitoring	1	\$_____	\$_____
Full mouth dental x-rays	1	\$_____	\$_____
Dental charting	1	\$_____	\$_____
Dental polishing with fluoride treatment	1	\$_____	\$_____
Recovery nursing care	1	\$_____	\$_____
Hospitalization, 1 to 12 hours	1	\$_____	\$_____
Antibiotics for post-therapy care	1	\$_____	\$_____
Dental home-care kit	1	\$_____	\$_____
Complimentary nail trim (value of \$_____)	1	\$_____	\$_____
TOTAL			\$_____

Your signature confirms that you have read this information, understand it and give our medical team permission to perform these services. Payment is due when services are provided. For your convenience, we accept cash, checks and major credit cards. We offer <third-party financing>, an interest-free medical payment plan for qualifying clients. At any time during your pet's treatment, you may ask for an updated treatment plan. Thank you for your confidence in us.

Pet owner signature

Date

If the veterinarian and technician have questions during your pet's procedure, what is the best phone number to quickly reach you? (____)_____

How would you like us to notify you when your pet wakes from anesthesia?

- ☐ Text message sent to (____)_____
- ☐ Phone call to (____)_____
- ☐ Email to _____

Using body language and visual aids to get clients to "yes"

Be aware of your body language. Research studies by Professor Emeritis Albert Mehrabian, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, found 93% of communication is from body language and non-verbal communication.⁵

- 7% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken
- 38% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said)
- 55% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression



Remove physical barriers between you and the client. Stand shoulder-to-shoulder or form L-shaped body language. This is collaborative body language, compared to a confrontational posture of talking across the table with a physical barrier between you and the client. Consider rolling stools for veterinarians to sit as they explain the diagnosis. Your goal is to be on the same eye level as the client. If the client is seated, you should be, too. Sit in a stool or kneel down so you are eye-to-eye. If the client is seated and the doctor is standing, he is in a position of dominance.

Create photo books or digital slideshows. Few pet owners have ever seen an animal's dental procedure from start to finish. To create photo books, use websites such as Shutterfly, Walgreens or Costco. Place photo books in each exam room and your lobby. Be sure that photos are kid-friendly because children will want to see the images you're showing to their parents. Take a photo of a smiling technician in your in-clinic lab to demonstrate preanesthetic testing—don't show a jugular blood draw on a patient (frightening!). For a digital option, create slideshows on digital photo frames, tablets or exam room computers. When computer hibernate, your slideshow becomes the screen saver.

Use easy-to-understand language. Dr. Stephen Juriga, Diplomate AVDC, of Veterinary Dental Center in Oswego, Illinois, advises to keep terms simple using the acronym "N.I.P. periodontal disease in the bud."

- N = Normal
- I = Infection and/or inflammation
- P = Painful

Avoid saying "estimate." This word centers on price. "Treatment plan" emphasizes needed medical care. Some human dentists use the term "treatment solutions."

Provide written treatment plans. Clients need to know what care their pets will need and the associated fees. Even when a favorite client says, "Just do everything," provide a written treatment plan. A treatment plan serves four purposes:

1. Explains needed medical care
2. Gives you legal permission to treat
3. Estimates the cost of care
4. States payment policies

Present service first, price last. Because clients need to understand service first, cover prices with an educational brochure such as dental report card or preanesthetic testing brochure. Explain each item, pointing to the left column that lists medical services. After you've shared photos and discussed medical services, reveal the price. Educating clients before showing prices helps them make informed decisions. Clients may jump to judgment if they see the price first without understanding the comprehensiveness of professional dental care.

Address clients' fear of anesthesia. Many pet owners may be afraid of anesthesia, yet veterinary teams often jump to judgment and assume rejection centers on price. Unlike people, pets won't tolerate a thorough full-mouth examination, dental cleaning and extractions without anesthesia. In human medicine, a third of patients have a fear of anesthesia distinct from their fear of the surgery itself.⁶ Risk of anesthetic death in dogs and cats is 0.17% and 0.24% respectively.⁷ When categorized by health status, risk of anesthetic death in healthy dogs and cats drops to 0.05% and 0.11%.

To overcome "Will my pet wake up?" stress the importance of preanesthetic testing. Use the word "include" if preanesthetic testing is required because "required" sounds like a rule that some clients might challenge. You won't get any arguments if it's included in the dental procedure. If preanesthetic testing is



optional, use the word “advocate” or “advise.” Say, *“We include preanesthetic testing. Just as your doctor would have you get a blood test before undergoing surgery, we do the same for pets. This simple blood test lets us check the health and function of internal organs and allows us to tailor anesthetic protocols.”*

Discuss surgical monitoring, which will reassure clients and is similar to their experiences in human medicine. Avoid medical jargon that makes the procedure sound expensive and scary. Never say, “We will hook your pet up to an electrocardiogram and pulse oximeter.” Instead say, *“We’ll monitor your pet’s heart rate, level of oxygen in the blood and body temperature during the dental treatment.”*

Ask for a commitment to treat today. After presenting the treatment plan and answering the client’s questions, ask closing questions such as:

- What questions can I answer about your pet’s dental treatment? This approach invites the client to ask anything he is unsure about. This phrasing is more effective than a yes-or-no choice of “Do you have any questions?”
- Shall we schedule your pet’s dental treatment?
- Do you need more information, or have I explained enough for you to decide?

Once the pet owner agrees to treatment, say, *“To get your permission to schedule your pet’s dental procedure, I need your signature on the treatment plan. We will keep a copy in your pet’s medical record, and I’ll give you a copy, so you have information on the services and fees we discussed.”*

Explaining the consequences of not treating

Animal Dentistry & Oral Surgery Specialists in Milwaukee and Oshkosh, Wisconsin, offer this advice to pet owners: *“Periodontal disease is infectious, progressive and destructive. Without professional dental treatments and home care, the result is treatment failure. Ignore the teeth and they will literally go away!”*⁸

Confidently discussing financing, preventive care plans and pet insurance

Offer payment plans through third-party financing. If a client says, “I can’t afford treatment,” the first no is not the final no. Present financing options, so you can deliver needed medical care.

Here are third-party providers that provide financing for veterinary clients:

- CareCredit, www.carecredit.com/practices/veterinary/
- Extend Credit Financing, www.extendcredit.com/veterinary/
- iCare Financial, <https://www.icarefinancialcorp.com/veterinary-financing-program>
- PaymentBanc Financing, www.paymentbanc.com
- Scratch Pay, <https://scratchpay.com>
- Vet Billing, www.vetbilling.com
- Wells Fargo Health Advantage, https://retailservices.wellsfargo.com/wfha_veterinarians.html

Say, *“I understand you’re concerned about the cost of your pet’s dental procedure, which is \$600. We offer <third-party financing>, a payment plan for approved clients, which has six months of deferred interest. Would \$100 per month fit your budget?”*



Offer preventive care plans with dental services. Plans with monthly payments could help more clients accept optimal care. Design plans that echo your standards of care. At Powell Boulevard Veterinary Clinic & Dental Center in Portland Oregon, having preventive care plans with dental add-ons has increased compliance (www.powellvet.com/?page_id=185). “We practice great medicine, but a lot of people can’t pay \$600 to \$700 for dentistry,” says Hospital Manager Denise Saxon. “Splitting it into 12 payments gives us more potential for extra earnings while also improving patient care. Now clients can afford extractions, dental x-rays and advanced care.”

Here are third-party providers that provide financing for preventive care plans:

- Avimark Wellness, www.avimark.net
- Extend Credit Financing, www.extendcredit.com
- IDEXX Petly Plans, www.petlyplans.com
- PaymentBanc Financing, www.paymentbanc.com
- WellPet Prevent Plans, www.preventplans.com

Provide information on pet insurance. Pick a preferred insurance provider that offers dental coverage and offer brochures during checkups (www.petinsurancereview.com/). With more than 14 U.S. pet insurance providers, too much information could overwhelm pet owners and they won’t chose any insurance. Besides the cost of the procedure, the insurance company may cover preanesthetic testing and related services.

Scheduling the procedure today

Schedule the procedure on the day of diagnosis. If you have computers in exam rooms, the technician can book the dental procedure now. If the client will check out at the front desk, the receptionist should schedule the procedure first, and then collect payment for today’s services.

Avoid the mind-erase hallway. Let’s say the veterinarian diagnoses Grade 2 dental disease during a dog’s preventive care checkup and has the technician present a treatment plan. The client goes to the lobby to check out and passes through the mind-erase hallway, forgetting to schedule the needed procedure. The receptionist was not in the exam room to hear the dental diagnosis, so she collects payment for today’s services and fails to schedule the dental procedure. Meanwhile, the veterinarian and technician assume that the dental treatment was booked at checkout.

To avoid consequences of the mind-erase hallway, your medical team needs to communicate scheduling expectations to receptionists. Use these four codes that would be entered into the electronic medical record, written on the paper chart or circled on a travel sheet:

- Grade 1 dental needed
- Grade 2 dental needed
- Grade 3 dental needed
- Grade 4 dental needed

When the receptionist sees the “dental needed” code, she knows to schedule the procedure during checkout. Take the approach of “schedule first, pay last” because the appointment reminder will print on today’s receipt.

Practice schedule first, pay last. The receptionist would say, *“I see that Dr. <Name> diagnosed <pet name> with Grade 1 dental disease. Let’s schedule your pet’s dental treatment first, and then I will get you checked out for today’s services. We can perform the dental treatment on*



Monday or Wednesday. Which choice fits your schedule?” An appointment reminder for the dental procedure will print on today’s receipt.

Use the two-yes-options technique. Guide the pet owner to schedule necessary follow-up care, offering the doctor’s two surgical/dental days. Whenever possible, always schedule the procedure with the same doctor who diagnosed the condition because he will be familiar with details of the case and enjoy production pay for the procedure. Scheduling with the same doctor also increases clients’ confidence.

Calling clients when procedures aren’t promptly scheduled

If the client doesn’t schedule on the day of diagnosis, the receptionist enters the “dental needed” code. This prints the medical recommendation on the client’s invoice, stating “Your pet was diagnosed with Grade 2 dental disease today. Please schedule treatment. We will follow up with a courtesy reminder call in one week.”

When you set up the Grade 1 to 4 dental needed codes, click on the reminder tab and set the callback for one week. When you run the daily call report in your practice-management software, a callback will automatically post next week. Then a receptionist calls the client as a courtesy reminder. Calling within one week of diagnosis is key—don’t wait 30, 60 or 90 days when the diagnosis and treatment plan will no longer be fresh in the client’s mind.

When the receptionist calls as a courtesy reminder one week later, she would say, *“Dr. <Name> asked me to call you about scheduling <pet’s name> dental treatment so we can treat his infection and slow the progression of his dental disease. When would be a convenient time for you to schedule <pet’s name> dental treatment? I have an opening on Friday or Monday. Which fits your schedule?”*

Using the veterinarian’s name brings credibility and authority to the call. The term “infection” indicates that treatment is urgent and necessary. Use the two-yes-options technique to guide the client to book the procedure.

Have receptionists call to schedule Grade 1 and 2 dental procedures. Veterinarians should call about Grade 3 and 4 dental treatments, which are more advanced dental disease and merit a medical callback. When a doctor calls, it elevates the importance of the procedure. Clients may be more likely to say yes to the “magic white coat” but staff members are oftentimes successful.

Increasing dental compliance could have a significant impact on practice health. If callback efforts generate two additional procedures per week, you could increase dental income \$4,128 per month or \$49,536 annually.

Having medical progress exams one week after procedures

Schedule progress exams. One week after a dental treatment, schedule a progress exam with a veterinarian or technician depending upon the complexity of the case and your state practice act guidelines. You can check on healing tissue from extractions, demonstrate how to brush the pet’s teeth on a dental model, confirm that the transition to a dental diet has been completed, and answer clients’ questions.



Include the progress exam in the cost of the dental treatment. Schedule the follow-up visit when the dental patient is discharged from your hospital.

Forward book the next exam. Think about your last visit to the dentist. Before you left, the receptionist scheduled your next hygiene appointment. This scheduling technique serves dual purposes of safeguarding patients' preventive care and the practice's financial health. The patient strategy ensures timely visits for professional care as well as to diagnose oral problems early.

As a business strategy for dentists, scheduling the next visit today will keep the hygiene schedule full and productive. When the hygiene schedule is not full, a domino affect will occur. Patient care will suffer without timely hygiene appointments, and the dentist will see openings in the treatment schedule in the future. At least 80% of dental problems—root canals, crowns and restorations—come from hygiene appointments. Dentists refer to their system as “recare appointments.” When patients leave today's hygiene appointment without a future one scheduled, a dental practice's profits will decrease at least 50%.⁹

Tell clients, *“Just as your dentist has you schedule your next hygiene appointment at checkout, we do the same, so we may proactively manage your pet's health. Dr. <Name> can see you on Wednesday, April 9 at 10 a.m. or Friday, April 11 at 3 p.m. for your pet's next preventive care exam. Which choice fits your schedule? We will remind you two weeks in advance in case you need to make changes.”*

If a procrastinator doesn't want to book the next appointment, use benefit statements. Say, *“I understand that you don't know your schedule 12 months from today. Let's schedule your pet's next preventive care exam for this same day and time next year. We will contact you two weeks before the appointment to confirm, so if you need to change the exam it will be easy. By scheduling today, you'll get your first choice of doctor, day and time. Your appointment reminder for Saturday, February 18, 2017 at 10 a.m. will print on today's receipt.”*

Creating reminders for future oral assessments

Send reminders for oral assessments. Link reminders to dental group codes. Whenever a procedure is performed and invoiced, a reminder will automatically follow.

The reminder is for the next oral assessment—not another dental procedure. Based on your hospital's preferences and practice act guidelines, this assessment could be performed by a veterinarian or credentialed technician. Your goal is to have the client schedule her pet's dental exam so you can practice “preventive dentistry” rather than waiting until dental pain or serious health problems emerge.

Follow-up oral assessment reminder intervals

Service	Reminder cycle
Grade 1 dental treatment	12 months
Grade 2 dental treatment	9 months
Grade 3 dental treatment	6 months
Grade 4 dental treatment	3 months



Use this message for a postcard and/or email reminder:
Dear <client name>:

Our records show that it's time for your dental exam. We want to proactively manage your pet's dental health to provide affordable care and early treatment before painful dental disease can develop. Your dental checkup includes:

- ✓ A dental exam and plan for good oral health
- ✓ Evaluation of whether you need a professional dental cleaning that cleans teeth above and below the gum line with an ultrasonic scaler and hand instruments. We use safe anesthesia, and dental patients go home the same day.
- ✓ Nutritional advice on a dental diet and treats

P.S. Call 555-555-5555 for an appointment.

Adopting best practices from the human dental profession

Measure your compliance. When you monitor case acceptance, you can create strategies and set goals for improvement. Perception versus reality can be enlightening. In human dental practices, dentists believed that 90% of patients accepted procedures after they nodded yes in the operatory. Based on data from thousands of dental offices, average case acceptance is 50% to 60% for existing patients and 25% to 35% for new patients. The dental practice goal should be greater than 80% for existing patients and 50% to 75% for new patients. Case acceptance of 80% or more is considered the gold standard.¹⁰

If your veterinary hospital has electronic medical records, run a report on the number of patients diagnosed with dental disease and compare it to the number of procedures performed. If you have paper charts, use the "Daily Dental Compliance Log" that is the last page of this handout to manually track results.

Discuss home care during checkups. When you visit your dentist, you typically leave with a toothbrush, floss and travel-size toothpaste. Sampling encourages home care and product brand loyalty. Daily brushing is the gold standard; however, research shows that only 6% of dogs and 2% of cats are having their teeth brushed daily.¹¹

During preventive care exams, ask pet owners *"What dental care do you do at home?"* This phrasing indicates they should be doing home care and is stronger than "Do you brush your pet's teeth?" which hints that home care may be optional.

If the client is interested in brushing, say, *"Just as dentists recommend that we brush our teeth twice a day, pets also need to have their teeth brushed once a day at home. We offer a small finger brush that slips over the tip of your finger to make it easy to brush a cat or dog's teeth, or you can use a toothbrush designed for a pet's mouth. We have pet toothpaste in flavors pets love such as poultry. Would you like me to demonstrate how to brush your pet's teeth?"*

Teach clients how to brush pets' teeth on dental models. Keep the model and toothbrush in a drawer or on a shelf in the exam room so it's within arm's reach.

Make a video on your smartphone on how to brush a pet's teeth featuring your technician. Post the video on your clinic's Facebook page, YouTube channel and website. Mention the video when you demonstrate brushing during puppy/kitten visits and during dental discharge appointments where you discuss dental care at home. Include the video link on the bottom of handouts.



If the client doesn't show interest in learning tooth brushing, say, *"I understand. We want you to do something that's easy and habit forming, so let me tell you about other choices."*

Ask questions to assess the client's commitment to providing home care such as:

- How much time do you have to spend on dental care at home for your pet?
- When is the most convenient time to do dental care at home in your schedule?
- Who is the primary care giver for the pet?
- Would you like to stretch out the length of time between professional dental cleanings with easy home care options?

Based on the client's answers, offer a dental diet, drinking water additive, rinse, gels, chews or a combination of several home-care products. Diet is an easy choice because every pet needs to eat! Explain diets with dental benefits during preventive checkups and dental discharge appointments.

Bring diets and home-care products into exam rooms. When you offer a product in the exam room, clients perceive it as medicine. When it's sold at the front desk, it's retail. For client convenience, they can get refills from retail shelves in your lobby, but new products should be brought into exam rooms. In an exam room, you'll have a client's complete attention as you explain the reason for the new diet, amount to feed and how to do a proper food transition.

Let's say you performed a dental procedure on a cat. When the technician does the dental discharge appointment, she will explain home-care instructions and share before-and-after dental photos. The technician would say, *"Because <cat name> was diagnosed with Grade 2 dental disease and had his dental procedure today, he now needs to <brand name> for oral health. This therapeutic diet has dry kibble that's abrasive and will help keep his teeth clean. Because <cat name> weighs ___ pounds, you should feed approximately ___ cup per day. I'm going to put a prescription label on the bag, so you know the right amount to feed and also have our phone number for when you need a refill. Let me explain how to do the food transition..."*

Provide instructions in writing. Another family member who was not present for the veterinary visit may be responsible for feeding. You also could make a video of a technician or veterinarian explaining how to do a proper food transition and include a link to the video on the handout.

Label home-care products. Put prescription labels on diets so clients know which pet the food belongs to, how much to feed and where to get refills.

Which goals will you implement from today's training?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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Helpful resources	Link
12 steps of a professional dental cleaning	www.dentalvet.com/patients/procare/12steps.htm
2013 American Animal Hospital Association Dental Care Guidelines	www.aaha.org/public_documents/professional/guidelines/dental_guidelines.pdf
AAHA Dental Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats implementation tool kit	www.aaha.org/public_documents/professional/guidelines/dentaltoolkit_booklet.pdf
Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians	http://avdt.us/
American Veterinary Dental College	www.avdc.org
Article: 8 ways to improve the dental discharge experience	www.csvets.com/userfiles/8%20Ways%20to%20Improve%20the%20Dental%20Discharge%20Experience.pdf
AVMA pet dental health month resources	www.avma.org/Events/pethealth/Pages/February-is-National-Pet-Dental-Health-Month.aspx
Book: <i>The Veterinary Practice Management Resource Book & CD</i> , includes consent for additional dental services, dental report cards	http://shop.csvets.com/books-and-videos/the-veterinary-practice-management-resource-book-cd/
Foundation for Veterinary Dentistry	www.veterinarydentistry.org
How to score dental disease	www.dentalvet.com/Encyclopedia/M04973.htm
Veterinary Oral Health Council	http://vohc.org/
Video: Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic dental cleaning video	www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI765nr2ZDg&feature=youtu.be
Video: Confirming surgical and dental appointments	www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WJV21Eavul
Video: Presenting a surgical invoice	www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-voqC0dIII
Video: Take dental pictures with your smart phone	www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BO51ZMuJaA
Video: Take the stress out of discharging dental patients	www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOJUzM06bPg
Video: Text clients when dental and surgical patients wake	www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmLtsBABr2Q
Webinar: 10 ways to educate clients about dentistry	http://shop.csvets.com/communication-skills/10-ways-to-educate-clients-about-dentistry/
Webinar: Creating the 5-star experience for surgery and dentistry	http://shop.csvets.com/communication-skills/creating-the-5-star-experience-for-surgery-and-dentistry/
Webinar: Dental promotions that boost compliance	http://shop.csvets.com/communication-skills/dental-promotions-that-boost-compliance/
Webinar: The team's role in promoting dentistry	http://shop.csvets.com/communication-skills/the-teams-role-in-promoting-dentistry/