

ALL ABOUT Small Pet Dental Health

Rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas, and other small herbivores are expert chewers with teeth that grow continuously throughout their lives. Dental disease is common in these species, but it's often preventable through proper diet and care. The following information is designed to help you take the necessary steps to ensure your pet's teeth are healthy throughout their entire lives.

DENTAL DISORDERS: WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Rabbits, guinea pigs, and chinchillas are prey animals that will often hide signs of pain and illness. Consult your veterinarian if you notice any of the following changes in behavior and/or appearance, as they may be an indicator of dental disease.

- Noticeably overgrown teeth
- Observed difficulty with chewing
- Reduced grooming and/or bald patches in the fur
- Abnormal eating or drinking
- Drooling or wetness around the mouth
- Reduced activity level
- Visible signs of pain (e.g. hunching in a corner or grinding teeth)
- Weight loss

Quick tip: Offer unlimited amounts of grass hay to rabbits, guinea pigs, and chinchillas. Hay stimulates normal chewing and dental wear patterns, helping decrease the risk of dental disease for pets whose teeth grow continuously.



PROPER ALIGNMENT VS. MISALIGNMENT:

Lack of proper dental wear can lead to a variety of serious issues, including: discomfort and pain, malocclusion, abscesses, bone spurs, and others. Contact your veterinarian if you notice any changes in the appearance of your pet's teeth and/or how they align.

Did you know rabbits have 28 teeth in total? In addition to the incisors in front, they have a series of auxiliary incisors (peg teeth) and premolars and molars (cheek teeth).



5 Ways to Manage Dental Health

1. SCHEDULE REGULAR VETERINARY CHECKUPS

Your pet should visit the veterinarian at least once a year (twice is even better) for a checkup. Your vet will assess your pet's dental health during this visit, and it's a great opportunity to ask any questions you have about your pet's teeth.

2. DON'T OVERFEED PELLETS OR TREATS

Pellets are an important part of your pet's daily nutrition, but overfeeding them can limit your pet's interest in hay. Always follow feeding recommendations on pellets and treats.

3. OFFER SAFE, ENRICHING NATURAL CHEWS

Chews made with woven hay, untreated wood, apple sticks, and other natural materials are great for helping keep your pet's teeth healthy. Offer multiple items to keep your pet interested and enriched.

4. FEED UNLIMITED AMOUNTS OF HAY

Hay is the ideal high fiber material to provide healthy dental wear for your pet's constantly growing teeth. Offer a variety of hays to prevent picky eating tendencies that can lead to dental disorders over time.

5. PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO YOUR PET

Observe your pet every day and make notes of any changes to his or her appearance, behaviors, and health. If you're ever concerned about the way your pet is acting, be sure to consult your veterinarian right away.



Hay and Your Pet's Dental Health:

- Grass hay is the ideal, high fiber material to provide healthy dental wear
- Eating hay facilitates the natural “side to side” chewing motion of small herbivores
- Offer a variety of grass hays to encourage consumption and prevent picky eating