

Bonnie's Dog & Cat Grooming Shares:

5 reasons You Don't Want Your Dog Groomer Brushing Your Dog's Teeth.



Every professional groomer wants you to take care of your dog's oral health. It is very sad when we handle dogs that exhibit obvious discomfort near their face and mouth during the grooming process, and the reason is often undiagnosed dental decay or infection. Why then don't we at Bonnie's Dog & Cat Grooming offer tooth brushing as a service to our clients?

First, plaque begins to form 4-12 hours after brushing so if the only time your dog's teeth are brushed is at the grooming salon, even for dogs that are groomed on a regular recommended schedule of every 6-8 weeks, the dog will not avoid tartar and serious tooth decay. Brushing a dog's teeth will not remove the tartar that causes tooth decay once it has formed, and brushing a dog's teeth is a useless exercise *unless it is done every day to remove the plaque, before tartar forms.*

Second, Grooming salon tooth brushing gives a pet owner the mistaken idea that they have done what's necessary for the tooth care of their pet. Pet owners often think they have taken care of their dog's teeth when they pay for brushing at the grooming salon which causes them to wait for an emergency to arise before seeking the real dental care necessary that can only be done under the supervision of a veterinarian. Many vets have had to console conscientious clients who believed they had done what was necessary to avoid emergency care and expense by paying the groomer to brush their dog's teeth and yet they were later faced with serious dental problems.

Third, most grooming salons which offer tooth brushing as a service assign the task to the staff member who bathes the dog. Dog bathing is an entry level position in the grooming industry and these staff members are typically the newest employees with the least amount of experience handling dogs. Thoroughly brushing a dog's teeth is not an easy endeavor for even the most experienced dog handler or for a pet owner who already has a trusting relationship with their dog. It is unrealistic to depend on a novice worker with a nervous dog in the bathing tub, to manipulate the dog's mouth and handle it inside and out, front and back. *It is almost impossible, even with the most compliant pets, to do a meaningful job of tooth brushing in that circumstance.*

Forth, real tooth care maintenance is done daily by the pet owner and real tooth cleaning is done under anesthesia by your veterinarian or under veterinarian supervision because it is done with a metal tooth scaler. Genuine canine tooth cleaning can actually be a risky procedure; tartar can easily enter the bloodstream through the gum line and cause serious, even fatal, infection. It should be done in a medical setting, not at the "hair salon". Only under anesthesia is it possible to access all the teeth inside and out, front and back safely and thoroughly. This is done by a trained medical professional.

The last reason we don't offer tooth brushing as a service at Bonnie's Dog & Cat Grooming is because it is promoted in our industry as an "add-on" to "up-sell" the customer and increase revenue. At industry trade shows, conventions, in grooming publications, and by companies that sell the products used, *increased profit is the reason tooth brushing is promoted*. I have never heard anyone suggest it actually benefits the dog's dental care except occasionally as a *way to introduce the practice of tooth brushing to the customer (as something the customer should also do daily at home)*, and then also sell them more products for home use on top of charging for doing it at the salon. At Bonnie's Dog & Cat Grooming we strive to build a long term relationship with our pet owning neighbors based on trust. I want my customers to trust that when I recommend something to them it is because it is in the best interest for them and their pet. I always preface my suggestions with the thought or phrase: "If this was my dog . . ." and I give my best advice as I would for my own pet. We don't follow the business model of using a lowball price to lure in customers, and then adding more expense at check-in. Our grooming price includes many premium products and services.

So you might ask: *What do I use for my own dog's dental health?* The picture at the top of the page is of my dog Folly's teeth, at 11 years of age. Folly has never needed his teeth cleaned by a vet, and I have never brushed his teeth. One meal a day (of their two meals), my dogs get raw bones. Raw bones are safe particularly if you use a joint bone. (I use chicken necks, turkey necks and duck necks.) I avoid using "long bones" like femurs, which are sold as soup bones or marrow bones because they are harder and present a risk of breaking a tooth. Joint bones are safer, even knuckle bones if you can't get neck bones are safer than "marrow bones".

Cooked bones are not safe! They can splinter and perforate the intestine. The dried/sterilized bones sold in pet shops are NOT SAFE – they are too hard and can break teeth and splinter.

Raw feeding is becoming increasingly popular but is still controversial with some veterinarians. I have chosen a level that I am comfortable with using raw bones one meal a day and the benefit to my dog's teeth has been amazing.