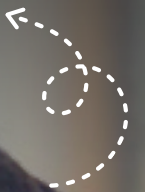


Paws-pectives

Let's book a free dental check
and learn how to brush my teeth!



**The key to a longer,
healthier life is right
under their nose!**

Why your pet's smile matters more
than you think, and how homecare
and annual dentals work together to
keep tails wagging and pussycats
purring for longer.



**PURRFECT PLAY
TIPS FOR YOUR CAT**

Cover photo: Coco & Vana, by Jodi

Be in to
WIN!*

Get your paws on
dental treats as
recommended by
Veterinary Nurse Marta!

It starts with a clean slate

Why preventative dental cleaning is still essential for their best life

**You've heard it said, "prevention is the best medicine".
And, when it comes to dental care for pets, nothing is more true.**

Just like humans, our pets can suffer from plaque build-up, gingivitis and painful dental infections. But unlike us, they can't tell us when something feels wrong. Many continue to eat, play and act normally, masking serious oral health problems under the surface. That's why regular dental checks and an annual professional dental clean under anaesthetic is the single most effective way to protect their smile, and their health.

During a dental procedure, your Petfirst healthcare team can:

- Fully examine each tooth, including below the gumline
- Chart each tooth, so we can keep a tooth-by-tooth record that can be built on over time
- Take dental x-rays to detect hidden issues
- Remove plaque and tartar that brushing can't reach
- Polish teeth to help prevent future build-up
- Address problem teeth before they cause pain or infection

Even pets with healthy-looking mouths can have underlying problems. A full-mouth assessment under anaesthetic is the only way to see what's truly going on, and to take action early, before things worsen.

“Many pets with dental disease don't show obvious signs until it's advanced. A regular, professional examination and clean can identify any problems early, and once sorted, gives us a clean mouth and knowledge of how to best care for that pet's mouth throughout their life - Lorna Humm, Petfirst Veterinarian.”

Dental health isn't just about teeth, it's about overall wellbeing. Untreated periodontal disease has been linked to kidney, liver and heart conditions. When we treat the mouth, we treat the whole pet.

Worried about age or anaesthetic risk? You're not alone, and we're here to help.

It's a common concern among pet parents, especially with older pets or those with health conditions. But the idea that age alone makes dentistry unsafe is a misconception. In fact, dental disease can significantly affect your pet's comfort, and overall quality of life, especially in their senior years. With careful planning and extra attention, your Petfirst team will work with you to develop a personalised plan that supports your fur friend's unique needs, whether that includes a professional dental procedure or a focused, homecare-first approach.



makes it easier!

Members enjoy:*

- \$250 off dental procedures every year.
- Unlimited consultations, including free dental checks.
- 10% off homecare products like chews and water additives.

Free Dental Health Check Consultations

We know how important it is to feel confident before booking a dental procedure. That's why we offer a complimentary dental health check. We'll gently examine your pet's mouth, talk through any changes you've noticed, and help guide next steps, whether that's a professional clean or a new homecare routine.

**Book a Free Dental Check at your local Petfirst clinic
or online at mypetfirst.co.nz**

Next in the Series:

"Not Perfect? Not a Problem"—why small, real-life homecare habits make a big difference (and how to start without guilt).

Not perfect? Not a problem!

How small home habits can add years to your pet's life

Let's face it – brushing your pet's teeth every day sounds great in theory, but in real life? Not always easy. Between wriggly fur friends, busy schedules, and the occasional toothpaste-eating incident, even the most dedicated pet parent can struggle. But here's the great news: you don't have to be perfect to make a real difference.

A new study on dogs found that even simple at-home care routines can significantly reduce plaque and improve gum health. Dogs were assigned to one of several dental homecare regimens, ranging from brushing, dental chews, water additives, or combinations of the three.

Here's what stood out:

- Every second day brushing + daily dental chews reduced plaque and calculus build-up.
- Weekly brushing + daily water additive produced the greatest improvement in gum health.
- Even just *one action*, like giving a chew each day, helped!
- Water additives alone weren't enough—they worked best when combined with brushing or chews.

This is huge news for pet parents. It means:

- You don't *have* to brush daily (although if you can, great!).
- You *can* get great results with just one or two small steps.
- Even pets who can't have a professional clean benefit from regular homecare.

“As our friendly vet nurses like to say, you're not being judged at Petfirst Veterinary. We're here to help you build a routine that works for your life and your pet.”

Every mouth is different. That's why our team can help you choose the right mix, whether it's brushing once a week, using VOHC-approved dental chews, or adding a safe water additive to your pet's bowl. The key is consistency, not perfection.

Ready to go? Read on for our top tips on getting into a dental homecare habit with your pet that is manageable *and* effective.



Study Reference:

Gawor J., Jank M., Harvey C.E., Nicolas C.S. (2024). Effectiveness of Dental Homecare Protocols in Unscaled Dogs. Journal of Veterinary Dentistry, 42(3), 176–181. DOI: 10.1177/08987564241292769

“Ready to get started? Book a **FREE Dental Check** with your local Petfirst Veterinary team. In this friendly and stress-free session, your veterinary professional will not only expertly check your fur friend's teeth and let you know how they're looking, but also show you how to look in their mouth, give you tips and tricks to get homecare started and send you off with a personalised plan, including recommendations for the right dental chew or additive for your pet.”



In the meantime, here are our top tips for getting your teeth into dental homecare:

- 1** Visit mypetfirst.co.nz to learn about dental homecare options and to find brushing videos, step by step guides and product recommendations.
- 2** Ask us about easy options such as dental toys, chews, food and water additives that can help to keep their teeth healthy as they eat, drink and play.
- 3** Make it a bonding experience. Rather than going straight in with a toothbrush, spend some time with your pet, stroking the sides of their face and letting them check out the brush and toothpaste. This is a great excuse for some extra pats!
- 4** Use the right tools. Toothbrushes and finger brushes especially designed for pets will make your job a lot easier! You'll also need some pet toothpaste – not only does it taste great to your pet, but is safe for them – unlike our own toothpaste.
- 5** Start Small. Try brushing just one side of your pet's mouth a few times a week. Use lots of praise (and treats), and don't worry if it's not perfect. **The goal is progress, not pressure.**
- 6** Get into a routine. Whether you're brushing their teeth every day or once or twice a week, doing it at the same time, will keep you both on track.



makes homecare easier!

Members enjoy:*

- 10% off dental treats, chews and water additives.
- Unlimited consultations to check progress.
- \$250 off dental procedures if needed.

*visit petfirstwellness.co.nz for ts & cs





From itching and scratching to comfort and relaxing

An itchy pet can be frustrating for both pet and pet parent – getting to the cause is often easier said than done!

Your pet's skin is its largest organ, creating a protective barrier against allergens, infections, and potential toxins. When skin becomes unhealthy, this barrier weakens, affecting your pet's comfort and overall quality of life. Here's how you can help ensure your pet's skin stays healthy.

Nutrition: Healthy skin begins with a balanced diet rich in high-quality proteins and fats. Look for pet foods with real meat and oils listed as the first ingredients, as these provide essential nutrients. Cheaper diets often rely on cereals and bone meal, which are less beneficial for skin health.

Nutrients that promote healthy skin:

- Omega-3 Fatty Acids (DHA & EPA): Help reduce inflammation and support the skin's protective barrier.
- High-Quality Protein: Necessary for constant skin cell regeneration.
- Vitamins C & E: Aid in reducing inflammation and itching.

Parasite prevention – a must for skin health: Regular flea control is essential for both cats and dogs. Fleas can cause severe itching, and some pets may develop an allergy to flea saliva, leading to widespread irritation from just one bite. A single female flea can lay up to 50 eggs daily, causing a significant infestation within weeks. Most flea treatments also cover ticks and mites. Ask a Petfirst team member for recommendations on the best treatment for your pet.

Shampooing and grooming: Routine grooming helps prevent matting, faecal build-up, and discomfort. Some pets need regular professional grooming, while "hygiene grooms" may be necessary to keep areas like toes, ears, and under the tail clean. Regular brushing and shampooing allow you to monitor for any skin issues. Using pet-specific and appropriate shampoos can assist in managing odour and support skin health, especially for pets with allergies or infections. Avoid frequent shampooing, as it can dry out the skin.

Allergies: Itchy skin, marked by scratching, licking, rubbing, or bald patches, can indicate an allergy. Allergies can be triggered by environmental factors like pollen, or dust mites. Contact allergies can occur to certain grasses. Food allergies can also occur and are sometimes accompanied by gastrointestinal symptoms. Some cases may need referral to a veterinary dermatologist.

Certain breeds are more prone to skin conditions due to genetics. Conditions such as scaling skin, immune-mediated diseases, deep follicular infections, and even sun damage (especially in white-furred pets) require veterinary care. In warmer months, be cautious of grass seeds, which can embed in your pet's skin, causing infections. Skin issues can be persistent, but proper nutrition, grooming, and parasite control can greatly improve your pet's skin health.

If you have noticed your fur family member itching, we recommend booking a skin consultation to ensure your pet receives the care they need for long-term comfort and health.

Cat enrichment

Keeping curious minds happy

by Petra Hall, Petfirst Veterinarian

Our feline fur friends might seem content lounging on a windowsill, but behind that sleepy gaze lies a curious, intelligent predator in need of stimulation. Mental and physical enrichment is just as important as nutrition, cuddles, and vet care; it helps cats stay healthy, builds confidence, and can even reduce behaviours like scratching the couch or hiding under the bed.

Why enrichment matters:

Cats are natural hunters, climbers, and problem solvers. In the wild, they spend a huge part of their day exploring, stalking and “working” for food. While our indoor cats enjoy safety and comfort, they miss out on some of that natural mental stimulation. That’s where enrichment comes in, helping them live their best life by encouraging their natural behaviours in healthy, playful ways.



Bowl-free feeding

Ditching the dinner bowl is a great first step. Food puzzles and foraging feeders give your cat a rewarding challenge and mimic natural hunting behaviour.

How about trying:

- Hunting Feeders: Perfect for scattering meals across the home
- KONG Wobblers: A fun option for active cats who enjoy batting and chasing
- Feline Fun Board: An all-in-one puzzle platform to explore with paws and nose

These tools help prevent boredom and encourage gentle activity – especially important for indoor cats or those on weight management plans.



Training and tricks

Cats can be trained – and they love it! Teaching your cat to sit, come, or follow a target stick is a great way to connect. Use tasty treats like Greenies or freeze-dried morsels and reward gently with each success. Training builds trust, confidence and gives your cat a sense of control. Start small and keep sessions short and positive. A great tool to try: Target Stick – ideal for clicker-based games or basic trick training.



Think vertically

Cats feel safe and confident when they can view their world from up high. Consider installing cat shelves, creating cosy corners on top of bookshelves, or simply making space on your cupboard tops for a snooze spot. Vertical space lets your cat observe the world while feeling hidden – the perfect combo. Bonus: you’ll often notice a positive change in multi-cat households when everyone has their own perch!



What to avoid

While it might look fun, laser pointers are not recommended for cat play. Because your cat can never “catch” the light, it can create frustration and even compulsive behaviours toward light reflections. Instead, try wand toys or feather teasers that your cat can stalk, chase and finally catch!



Everyday magic

Sometimes, the best enrichment is free! Cats love cardboard boxes, scrunched-up paper, and rotating new “discoveries” around the house. Even a new view out the window can make a big difference.

Remember: A curious cat is a happy cat. Whether it's with food puzzles, gentle training, or vertical adventures, small changes can make a big impact on your fur friend's wellbeing. Need advice tailored to your cat's needs? Your vet can help recommend the right enrichment tools and feeding plan to support your feline's unique personality.





Meet Marta

I'm Marta, one of the nurses at Petfirst Queenstown! I am utterly dedicated to maintaining impeccable oral hygiene for my beloved dogs, Mera and Lillo, because we share every moment together and we all deserve fresh breath and healthy smiles.

Greenies are VOHC approved and it's clinically proven that they reduce plaque and tartar. They're ideal for sensitive stomachs (common in breeds like Australian Shepherds) since they're gentle, plant-based, and free from harsh ingredients. Daily use supports ongoing oral care and keeps breath fresh, fitting seamlessly into our routine (It's Mera and Lillo's favourite part of the day!).

I always supervise chewing for safety and reinforce that brushing remains the gold standard. As a vet nurse, I can recommend Greenies as the best ally for oral hygiene when combined with professional scale and polish. We always strive for the best for our four-legged friends, as their health is our priority. Healthy teeth, happy pets!

Go into the draw to WIN a pack of Greenies for your dog or cat. To be in to win, head to our Facebook page and share a pic of your fur friend's smile. (closes 30/9/25, winners notified by email).



Did you know...?

You can chat to your local clinic team on WhatsApp!

Next time...

Look out for your next **Petfirst Paws-pectives** in November 2025!

Do you have a burning question or topic suggestion? Email feedback and ideas to us at hello@mypetfirst.co.nz

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