



# PET CARE

# Brush Your Pet's Teeth

**W**e know how important exercise is to our four-legged friends, but when it comes to health, don't forget your pet's teeth.

Equally important to annual dental exams at your veterinarian's practice is home dental care, according to the American Animal Hospital Association. The AAHA recommends brushing your pet's teeth every day from an early age.

Doing so can help prevent serious oral diseases. If these types of issues are left untreated, they can lead to pain and problems with the heart, lung and kidney.

## **SIGNS OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE**

Pet owners should be regularly examining their pet's teeth for signs of periodontal disease. The AAHA points to these main indicators:

- Brownish colored teeth
- Swollen, red or bleeding gums
- Persistent bad breath
- Loose teeth or loss of teeth
- Pus between the gums and teeth
- Broken teeth and any unusual growth in the mouth.

Reluctance to eat, play with chew toys or drink cold water also are warning signs of periodontal or gum

disease. If you see any of these warning signs, consult with your veterinarian immediately for a dental exam and treatment options.

## **INTRODUCING DENTAL CARE**

Pets will naturally be hesitant to submit to dental care, especially if you introduce it later in their lives. A slow, gradual introduction works best for keeping your pet calm during the process. The AAHA recommends starting by using your finger to gently rub along your animal's gums and teeth.

Eventually work up to a toothbrush specially designed for pets. Scrub the gum line in a soft, oval motion with the brush at a 45-degree angle. Veterinarians warn against using toothpaste or baking soda, as they can make your pet's stomach upset.

Dental care is one of the most commonly overlooked areas of pet health care, but is crucial to the overall well-being of your pets. Check with your veterinarian today to set your pet up on a dental care plan that can lead to optimal health for years to come.





# Bonding with Your Pet

**W**hat would we do without our pets? Animals have won over the hearts of pet owners across the world. They offer us unconditional love and loads of laughs that make our lives better.

And the truth is, we can build even better bonds with our beloved pets by taking a few simple actions each day. Forming a great bond with your pet is simple. Here are three ideas to try yourself as you reconnect with your favorite pooch, feline or pet of your choice.

## CONDUCT SOME TRAINING

Depending on how your animal responds to direction and discipline, training exercises can be a great way of building a bond with your pet.

New behavioral training builds your skills in communicating with your pet, as well as in trusting him or her to listen to instructions. Make sure to keep training positive and collaborative, using a gentle, reward-based approach.

This style will help your pet look forward to training, giving the two of you positive time together to grow as pet and owner.

## MAKE FEEDING TIME STRUCTURED

When it's time to prepare meals, engage with your pet during the process. Call your dog over to sit and wait while you fill up the bowl. Pet the dog and talk to it to encour-

age a calm, relaxing eating experience.

Always remember to give your pet space during mealtime. Following a structured routine such as this helps your pet respect your rules and understand that you call

the shots. This healthy relationship will help you earn your pet's respect, leading to a strong bond over time.

## DON'T FORGET TO PLAY

You can introduce training and structured mealtimes until

you're blue in the face, but until you devote some time to playing with your pet, you won't be unlocking the true essence of being a pet owner.

Games such as fetch, tug-of-war or chase will help you not only keep in shape, but also

allow your pet to enjoy your company because of your positive energy. Think of ways to introduce listening exercises within your play and look for parks that are pet friendly. The more space the better to let your pet explore and enjoy.





# Become a Pet Sitter

**C**aring for pets while earning a living at the same time? That's a win-win. If you are passionate about pets, starting a pet-sitting business may be right for you.

Pet owners — especially those who like to travel — are always looking for the most convenient care for their pets while they are away. While most veterinarians offer great boarding services for pets, many owners decide that the home environment leads to a much more relaxed experience for both owner and pet.

That's where you come in. Pet-sitting businesses have expanded in recent years and are being started at a fast pace. Starting one is easy and requires very little initial investment. The marketing to get the word out on your business is the extent of your expenses, especially considering you don't need a expensive storefront or costly equipment to get started. You literally only need an open schedule and a love for animals to launch your business.

## WHAT DO PET-SITTERS DO?

Pet-sitters handle a wide range of responsibilities for their pet-owner clients. This can include feeding, walking,

training, playing, bathing, brushing and administering medication. Cleaning up accidents and changing litter boxes can also be part of the job description, as can checking the mail, watering plants and general house upkeep.

You may work out an agreement to either spend the night at your clients' homes or just perform general check-ins throughout the day or night, so you have to be prepared to go with the flow.

## HOW MUCH CAN YOU EARN?

As with any entrepreneurial job, you can earn as much as the market bears for your services. You can either charge by the hour or by the day, depending on what makes the most sense for your bottom line.

The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters reports that the national average for this type of role is \$16 per visit. Depending on how many clients you can line up during a day, this can lead to a nice pay-day.







© FOTOLIA

# Pet Ownership Statistics

**P**et owners form a collective community focused on one thing: the health and safety of their animal friends. There is a strong bond between people who fall into this category, and it's fun to see how others became so involved in pet ownership.

Here are some recent statistics reported by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the American Veterinary Medical Association:

- About 70 to 80 million dogs and 74 to 96 million cats are owned in the United States. Up to 47 percent of all households in the United States have a dog, and up to 37 percent have a cat.
- Approximately 40 percent of pet owners learned about their pet through word of mouth.

- The majority of pets are obtained from acquaintances and family members. About 28 percent of dogs are purchased from breeders, and 29 percent of cats and dogs are adopted from shelters and rescues.
- More than 35 percent of cats are acquired as strays.
- The most common reasons why people relinquish or give away their dogs is because their place of residence does not allow pets (29 percent). The most common reasons for cats are that they were not allowed in the resi-

dence (21 percent) and allergies (11 percent).

- The average number of litters a fertile cat produces is one to two a year; the average number of kittens is four to six per litter.
- The average number of litters a fertile dog produces is one a year; the average number of puppies is four to six.
- Only 10 percent of the animals received by shelters have been spayed or neutered, while 83 percent of pet dogs and 91 percent of pet cats are spayed or neutered.



# Setting Up a Fish Tank

**O**wning fish is an enjoyable experience for people of all ages. And while fish ownership requires plenty of maintenance, it can be a great transition for younger children into owning larger, more dependent animals.

One of the most expensive and time-consuming investments you need to make before bringing home fish is choosing their tank. These can be costly depending on the size and extra pieces required for a properly functioning home for your new pets.

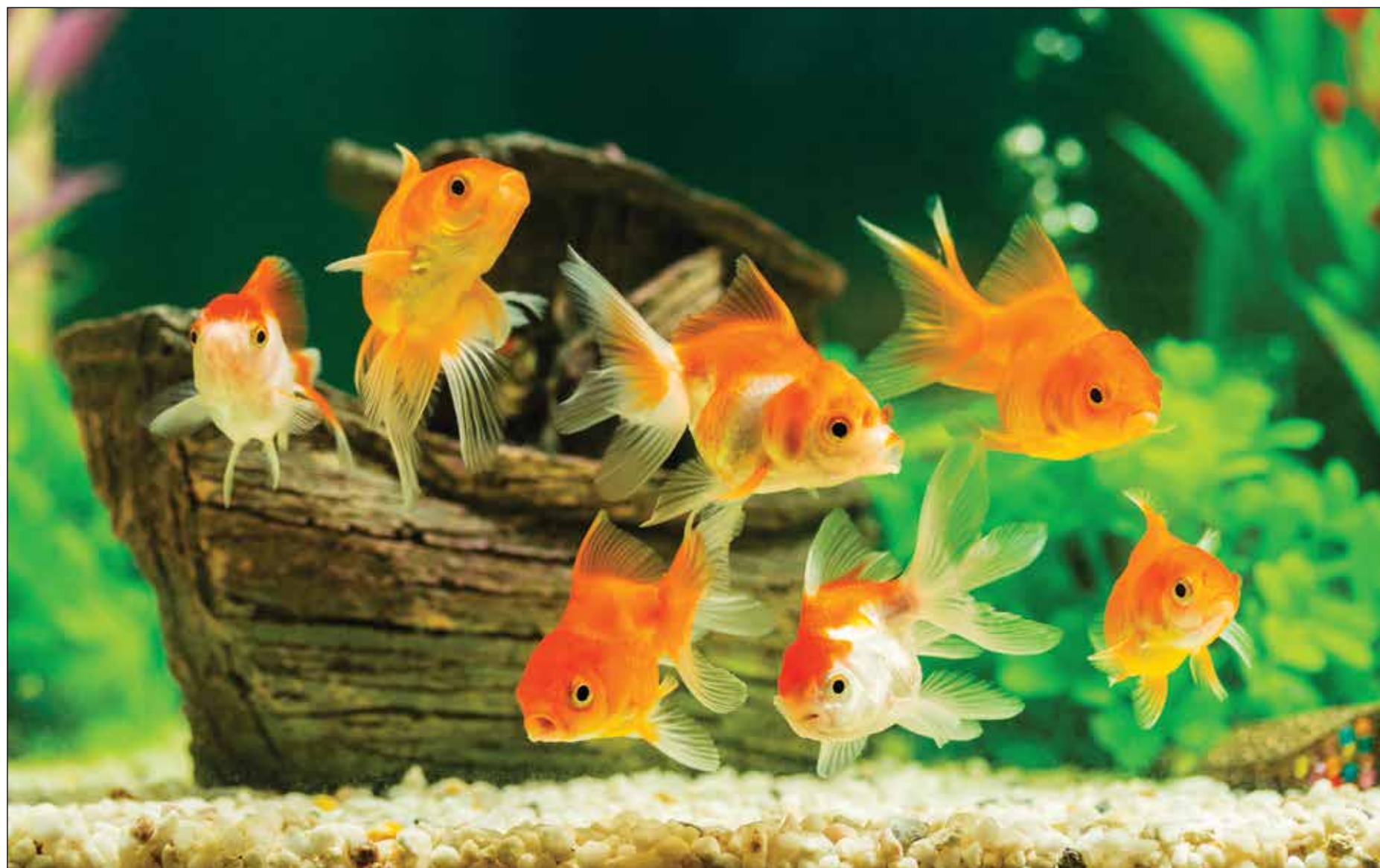
Once installed, tanks take up a lot of time in regular cleaning and maintenance.

Be prepared for both and do your best to plan ahead of time where the tank will be placed and who will be taking care of the majority of the upkeep. Once you decide those things, it's time to set up and maintain the tank.

## SETTING UP THE TANK

The first step to setting up your new tank is adding rinsed gravel to the bottom of it. Most tank manufacturers recommend one pound of gravel per gallon of water. There are various colors of gravel on the market, so decide which works with your in-tank design scheme.

Next comes the filtration system, which can either be simple or complex, depending on the size of your tank and the species of your new fish. Without proper filtration, fish waste can poison the water. Read up on proper filtration



© FOTOLIA

processes to make sure you're giving your fish the healthiest environment possible.

## FILLING THE TANK

After you fill your tank with clean tap water, it's time to add chemical neutralizers to stabilize your pH levels.

Consult with your pet store to find out the recommended levels for your specific type.

Don't forget fun decorations and a light source for your fish. These details put the finishing touches on your tank and help you put a little personality into the home of your

newest fish.

## INTRODUCING YOUR FISH

Start your tank with a handful of fish to help ease their transition into their new home. Don't forget to let the plastic bag you bought the fish in float in the water for about

20 minutes to let them acclimate to the temperature of the water.

Add a couple of fish every week until you have your optimal number. Doing so slowly helps your fish feel more comfortable with new additions and less competitive over food.



# Winter Safety

**H**umans aren't the only ones affected by the bone-chilling temperatures and heavy snowfall that often accompanies winter. Our pets are equally impacted and require some special preventive care in the wintertime.

Frostbite, falls and hypothermia should all be real concerns for pet owners, especially for those living in colder parts of the country.

Fortunately, with a little common sense and attention to detail, you will be able to protect your pets from the dangers of winter.

## GIVE THEM SHELTER

It's obviously best to keep pets inside during the winter months. Just because pets have fur doesn't mean they're not cold when the temperatures drop. No pets should be left outside for long periods of time in below-freezing weather.

If you are unable to keep your dog inside during cold weather, provide warm, solid shelter that protects against biting winds. Also provide plenty of fresh, non-frozen water to keep your pet hydrated. Use thick, dry bedding for a comfortable area for your pet to sleep.

## CHECK THE PAWS

Your pet's paws can become cracked or bloody if exposed to frigid winter conditions. Check your dog's paws frequently for signs of injury. Watch how he or she walks and look for any sudden lameness or painful strides.



© FOTOLIA

If you take your dog on a walk in conditions that have recently been snowy or icy, you may be exposing your pet's paws to deicers, anti-freeze or other chemicals that could be toxic at high levels. After your walk, always wash

or wipe down your pet's feet, belly and legs to remove these types of fluids.

## COLLAR AND CHIP

Many pets get lost in the wintertime because snow and ice can make it harder for them

to find their way home. That's because these conditions can mask recognizable scents that a pet uses to navigate around your land or neighborhood.

This underscores the importance of always using a well-fitting collar that contains updat-

ed identification and contact information. Your veterinarian likely offers microchip services that provides a permanent form of identification if you keep the registration up to date. Check with your veterinarian to discuss your options.



# Spay and Neuter

**D**id you now that the cost of spaying or neutering a pet is less than the cost of raising puppies or kittens for a year? The decision to go through with this procedure for your beloved pet is a smart one.

Spaying and neutering pets is the only permanent, fully effective method of birth control for dogs and cats.

Research has shown that having your pet spayed or neutered can have many positive effects, including a reduction in the number of homeless pets killed, an improvement in bad behavior and an overall boost to your pet's health.

According to a 2013 article in USA Today, pets who live in the states with the highest rates of spaying and neutering also live the longest. Researchers found that neutered male dogs lived 18 percent longer than unaltered male dogs and spayed female dogs live 23 percent longer than unaltered female dogs.

## REDUCING PET HOMELESSNESS

The number of homeless animals is a result of so many pets not being spayed or neutered. In the U.S., there are an estimated 6 to 8 million homeless animals entering animal shelters every year, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Animals.

Further ASPCA research has found that as many as 300,000 homeless animals are euthanized in animal shelters every year in some states. Nationwide, more than 2.7 million healthy, adoptable cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters annually.

## IMPROVING YOUR PET'S HEALTH

Choosing to spay or neuter your pets can decrease their urge to roam, which reduces their chance of fighting with other animals, getting struck by cars and getting into other dangerous situations.

According to the ASPCA, un-spayed female cats and dogs have a far greater chance of developing fatal uterine infections, uterine cancer and other cancers of the reproductive system.

Consider all of the aforementioned facts, as well as any guidance your veterinarian gives you, when making the best decision for you and your pet.

