

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Karen Vitt, Public Relations, (503) 290-3712, karen.vitt@banfield.net

Focus on Pet Dental Care in February ~ National Pet Dental Health Month

PORTLAND, Ore. ~ Think your Pet's "doggie breath" or "kitty breath" is normal? Think again. Bad breath may be a symptom of problems with your Pet's teeth or gums — problems that may be prevented through good Pet dental healthcare. February marks the 11th Annual National Pet Dental Health Month, and Banfield, The Pet Hospital® would like to remind families that Pets, just like humans, need routine dental care to prevent periodontal disease and maintain overall health.

Because dental care often is one of the most neglected Pet health needs, periodontal disease (an infection between the teeth and gums) is very common. It can cause problems from foul breath and mild inflammation of the gums, to root abscesses and tooth loss. The disease can even lead to other problems that may shorten Pets' lifespan. For example, bacteria from untreated dental problems can get into the bloodstream and cause serious heart or kidney problems. Fortunately, periodontal disease can be prevented through regular home care and routine professional dental cleaning (prophylaxis).

Healthy teeth and gums are an important part of your Pet's good health. Banfield recommends routine wellness exams for Pets twice each year, during which our veterinarians will examine Pets' teeth and provide recommendations for any necessary dental care. Here are some steps families can take at home to promote good dental health for Pets between veterinary office visits:

- Give Pets tartar-control and plaque-control food and treats
- Brush teeth regularly with special Pet toothbrushes (gentle, finger-tip devices are available) and Pet toothpaste
- Provide dry food (moist diets and sticky treats enhance the formation of plaque)
- Examine Pet's mouth for changes, i.e. redness or swelling of gums, mouth ulcers, stained teeth or other symptoms listed below (veterinarians can teach Pet owners how to open mouths gently)

Introducing Pets to a good dental hygiene program at an early age can stop dental problems in the early stages, which will help to prevent periodontal disease and extend Pet lives. Your Pet already may be experiencing stages of periodontal disease if you notice bad breath; inflammation of the gums; lumps or bumps in the gums; pain while eating; brown stains on teeth; loose, cracked or broken teeth; or ulcers or sores on the gums. If your Pet displays any of these symptoms, visit your veterinarian as soon as possible for an oral exam or dental cleaning.

During the month of February, Banfield hospitals across the country encourage Pet parents to stop by and pick-up a free brochure with photos illustrating the four stages of periodontal disease in Pets. To locate the Banfield nearest you, call 1-800-768-8858 or visit www.banfield.net.

To set up an interview with a Banfield Pet health expert, please call Karen Vitt, Public Relations, at (503) 290-3712 or karen.vitt@banfield.net. Founded in Portland, Oregon, in 1955, Banfield now has more than 450 Banfield hospitals across the U.S., the U.K. and Mexico, helping extend the lives of more than 3.5 million Pets each year.

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