

Healthy Mouth, Healthy Pet

Manufacturers are making it easier than ever for pet owners to help their dogs and cats maintain healthy teeth and gums—an essential part of our four-legged friends' overall wellness.

BY NORA CALEY

For pet owners, oral care means much more than simply brushing their pets' teeth. There are also treats, drops and other items that can help keep the animals' gums healthy and their breath fresh. In fact, manufacturers are constantly developing a variety of new ways to take care of pets' teeth and breath, with the common threads being ease of use and natural ingredients.

It should come as no surprise that this product category is a source of constant innovation, as consumers have proved quite willing to buy oral care items as part of their efforts to maintain their pets' overall health. According to the Chicago-based market research firm Mintel's *Pet Supplies US 2017* report, 33 percent of pet owners said they bought dental care products such as toothbrushes and dental chews when asked which health and grooming supplies they purchased for their pets in the past year. Overall, dental health supplies rank second, after flea and tick spot treatments, which were purchased by 42 percent of the survey respondents.

KEEPING EVERYONE HEALTHY

The demand for oral care solutions reflects consumers' growing awareness of the need for dental care products for their pets. "This category is experiencing substantial growth due in large part to



pet parents understanding the value of their own oral health, the humanizing of their pets and the increased emphasis in the media about pet wellness," says Deborah Brown, vice president of Pet King Brands, Inc., based in Westmont, Ill. "Pet parents are also becoming more educated about the long-term implications of not providing good oral care."

Brown says there are several trends that are driving the oral care category. First, pet owners are looking for brushless products that are easy to use, so that humans and pets can incorporate these into a daily routine. With this in mind, consumers are looking for products that are available in various

dispensing options, such as sprays or drinking water additives. In addition, current on-trend products perform more than one task, such as cleaning teeth, fighting plaque and eliminating bad breath.

Safety is, of course, also important—especially considering that certain ingredients can be toxic to some animals. "There are ingredients that are safe for cats but deadly for dogs, such as Xylitol, a common sweetener," Brown says.

Pet King Brands offers the oral care remedy product Oratene Antiseptic Gel for serious mouth conditions. The company says the new product is the most potent

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PRODUCTS WITH BITE

Understanding that good oral hygiene is an important part of maintaining a pet's overall health, manufacturers are constantly developing new ways to make oral care easier for pet parents. Here are just a few of the standout products in this growing category:

Glo-Marr Products (glomarr.com) has added Better Breath Oral Spray for Dogs and Better Breath Water Additive for Dogs to the Kenic Pet Products line. Both are made with natural ingredients and no artificial dyes or fragrances. The ingredients include distilled water, peppermint extract, cinnamon, honey, cloves and aloe vera. The Kenic Better Breath Oral Spray for Dogs is available in 8-oz. and gallon sizes, and the Kenic Better Breath Water Additive for Dogs is available in 17-oz. and gallon sizes.



Brushzees is the newest dental chew shape from **WHIMZEES** (whimzees.com), a brand that is now part of WellPet. The dog dental care chews are crafted with ridges and grooves to help reduce plaque, tartar and bad breath. Brushzees feature the Pawfect Paw Pad, designed to help dogs' paws grip the product to chew more easily. Brushzees are limited ingredient, GMO-free, gluten-free, vegetarian and free of any artificial flavors, colors or preservatives.

Vet worthy (vetworthy.com) Enzymatic Toothpaste for canine dental care helps maintain healthy teeth and gums. It is veterinarian recommended and formulated and made in the USA. The toothpaste is currently available in a 3-oz. squeeze tube and is a peanut butter flavor that dogs love.



enzymatic formula in the Oratene line. It is designed to soothe and relieve and is recommended for pets with periodontal disease, stomatitis, gingivitis, red inflamed gums and ulcerations. Oratene is an alternative to chlorhexidine, a disinfectant and antiseptic that can reportedly help reduce tartar buildup but can also have unpleasant side effects.

Andrew Groth, president of PetzLife Products Inc. in Spring Park, Minn., agrees that pet owners are looking for easy-to-administer oral care solutions.

"Cats especially need a stress-free dental program for them and their owners," he says. "No one likes to wrap their cat up like a burrito every time they need to trim nails or apply treatments." Also, consumers are looking for all-natural and made-in-the-USA products made from human-grade ingredients.

PetzLife, which in 2017 was acquired by Chesterfield, Mo.-based Manna Pro Products LLC, plans to expand its No Brush line of oral care products. The company is also planning a "Best Smile" contest in February for the AVMA-sponsored National Pet Dental Health Month.

"The future can only get better," Groth says. "With the rise of awareness of dental issues being left untreated, the category could grow rapidly with all of the new products and marketing that is getting attention."

James Brandy, content writer and public relations manager for Wentzville, Mo.-based TropiClean Pet Products, agrees that the oral care category is poised for continued growth, which will be driven by responsible pet parents looking for innovative solutions.

"Keeping up with our pet's oral hygiene isn't a task we can brush off; it's an important part of keeping our furry friends healthy," he says. "Neglected oral care can lead to numerous implications later, like kidney and liver issues, and can become a costly venture at the veterinarian's office."

TropiClean Fresh Breath offers a complete oral care line, with oral care kits, brushes, gels and no-brushing solutions like a water additive and new Dental Chews. The new TropiClean Fresh Breath Dental Chews are made with the same natural ingredients as the Fresh Breath products. They are grain- and gluten-free and crafted in the USA. The chewy texture helps remove plaque and tartar.

HELP FOR SENIOR PETS

Another trend that is boosting interest in oral care is that pets are living longer. One growing segment in pet care products is for senior dogs, age seven-plus years.

"Just like humans, they can have sensitivity and pain due to decay which can lead to other problems," says Michael Stockle, president/