

## steps: How to better promote dental care at your veterinary practice

Ready for your practice to live up to the latest AAHA Dental Care Guidelines? Follow these tips to get your whole team on board and ready to take pet oral healthcare to the next level.

Prep your team.
The 2013 AAHA
Dental Care Guidelines
for Dogs and Cats may
seem like a daunting
document, so summarize them for your team
and review them in a
30-minute staff meeting.

Then follow up with a team training session to show staff the common dental procedures they'll soon be discussing with clients. Make it an interactive event by preparing about 10 to 15 questions that you'll fire off as they observe. (For more infor-

mation on the updated guidelines, visit **dvm360** .com/guidelines.)

**2** Be ready at reception. Now that your staff is confident about the dental services your practice provides, it's time to get pet owners in



>>> Showing before and after pictures is a great way to get pet owners on board with preventive dental care.

the door. Make sure your receptionists are prepared to deal with "phone shoppers"—pet owners calling multiple clinics in search of the best price on a dental procedure—by explaining that the doctor won't know exactly what's needed until he sees the patient's mouth. Then offer to schedule a complimentary oral exam. If existing clients don't immediately make an appointment when the doctor makes a recommendation, make sure your receptionists schedule a phone call with the client in seven to 10 days for an additional prompt.

**Excel in the exam room.** It's not just up to the receptionists to get clients in the door. Exam room assistants also have to help convey the message that dental care is of utmost importance. Ask your assistants to take pictures of pet's teeth in the exam room and compare them to images taken during the pet's last exam. Has the pet's oral health worsened since the last visit? Use that as fuel

to stress the importance of scheduling a dental procedure today.

Give the client a hand. Once pet owners elect to schedule the procedure, give them a hand—but also give them some help. Dental procedures can be expensive, so consider offering clients the option to pay a portion at the time of service and pay the rest in monthly installments. (Head over to dvm360 .com/paymentoptions to learn more about offering this service to clients.) And don't forget about home care once the pet leaves. Pool your staff to find out what kind of oral healthcare maintenance instructions should go home with clients. What do your team members do at home with their pets? Brushing a dog's teeth might not be the best option for every pet owner, so make sure you and your team come up with a few other options, such as making changes to the pet's diet, to ensure that the pet's homecare is actually feasible for the

folks at home.

Measure your practice's success. Now that you've put so much work into promoting oral health and following expert advice, make sure everyone knows it. Brag about the dental services you're providing on your practice's website as well as Facebook and Twitter. (Not sure what to say on social media? Visit dvm360.com/dental**posts** to get started.) For your staff, keep track of how many dental procedures you're performing compared to past years and keep them motivated to make more mouths happier in the months to come. Finally, survey your clients about the service their pet just received. Did they see the value in it? Would they do it again next year? Take their answers and tweak your plan as needed to ensure long-term success with your practice's dental care procedures. (Need help developing a survey? Visit dvm360.com/ **newclientsurvey** for an example.) ve

Source: Brian Conrad, CVPM