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Poster Presentations

The impact of home-prepared diets and home oral hygiene on oral health in cats and dogs

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Abstract

Many factors influence the oral health status of cats and dogs. The present study aimed to elucidate the influence of feeding home-prepared (HP) food v. commercial pet food on oral health parameters in these animals and to investigate the effect of home oral hygiene on oral health. The study surveyed 17 184 dogs and 6371 cats visiting over 700 Polish veterinary surgeries in 2006–7 during a Pet Smile activity organised by the Polish Small Animal Veterinary Association. All animals underwent conscious examinations to assess dental deposits, size of mandibular lymph nodes and gingival health. An oral health index (OHI) ranging from 0 to 8 was calculated for each animal by combining examination scores, where 0 indicates good oral health and 8 indicates poorest oral health. Information was collected on age, diet and home oral hygiene regimens. There was a significant effect of diet on the OHI ($P < 0.001$) whereby feeding the HP diet increased the probability of an oral health problem in both cats and dogs. There was a significant beneficial effect of feeding only commercial pet food compared with the HP diet when at least part of the diet was composed of dry pet food. Daily tooth brushing or the offering of daily dental treats were both effective in significantly reducing the OHI in both cats and dogs compared with those receiving sporadic or no home oral hygiene. Feeding only a dry diet was beneficial for oral health in cats and dogs. Tooth brushing and the offering of dental treats were very effective in maintaining oral health, provided they were practised daily.

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Footnotes

Abbreviations: C mix, dry and wet mixture of commercial pet food; dry, dry commercial pet food; HP, home-prepared; HP mix, home-

prepared plus wet and dry commercial; OHI, oral health index; wet, wet commercial pet food

