

Dog Bad Breath: Several Causes

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DOG dental care

BAD BREATH

not just from poor dental health

Bad breath, medically termed "halitosis," is a common problem reported by pet owners. The most common cause of halitosis is dental problems. Bacteria, saliva, and food particles can accumulate on the teeth and form plaque, which causes bad breath.

The plaque mineralizes and develops into tartar, which contributes to inflammation of the gums, called gingivitis. Gingivitis can progress to periodontal disease, which causes irreparable injury to the teeth and will make the breath even more unpleasant. Remember, even though your pet's mouth may look healthy, there still may be problems. The visible portion of a tooth can look normal even if the root is abscessed and causing a foul odor. Although dental problems are the chief culprit when it comes to bad breath, other diseases can cause this condition, as well.

In addition to dental problems, other causes of bad breath include:

- Diabetes mellitus or "sugar" diabetes - the breath may have a "fruity" odor caused by breakdown products of fat called ketones.
- Kidney disease - the bad breath is caused by an accumulation of toxic substances normally filtered out and eliminated by the kidneys.
- Gastrointestinal (digestive tract) disease including cancers, obstructions, gastric reflux, inflammation of the esophagus (esophagitis), inflammatory bowel disease, and certain infections - the bad breath may be a result of digestive contents, unhealthy tissue, or a change in the bacteria present in the intestinal tract causing abnormal amounts of smelly gas.
- Infections of areas around the mouth, such as the folds of the lips, can harbor bacteria and cause tissue injury resulting in odor.
- Respiratory disease, for example, some sinus infections or cancer involving the nasal passages can contribute to an abnormal smell around the mouth.
- Dietary "indiscretions," such as eating stool or spoiled garbage can cause very bad breath.

- Other oral disease, such as tonsillitis, cancer, trauma, and some autoimmune diseases result in inflamed tissue, which can cause a disagreeable odor. We've even seen a stick stuck crosswise on the roof of the mouth between the premolars (big back teeth) cause horrendous bad breath.

Any pet with bad breath should be examined by a veterinarian, unless you know the bad breath is caused by something the pet ate. Some causes of bad breath can cause severe and even fatal complications if not treated promptly.