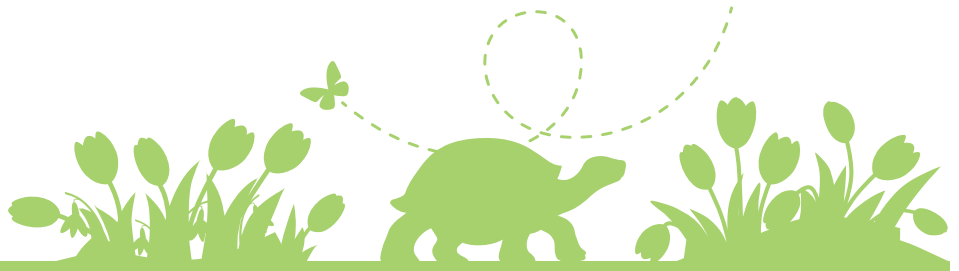


NOCO
HUMANE



SPRING 2025

PET SPECTIVE

A publication of NOCO Humane to further the compassionate, safe, and responsible relationship between animals and people.

HELPING CHILDREN BUILD SAFE, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANIMALS

Bringing home a new dog, cat, or other animal is a joyous occasion for the entire family, and can be especially exciting for young kids. Children and pets can have wonderful relationships that teach responsibility, empathy, and patience. At the same time, young children often lack the skills to read a pet's body language, which can lead to misunderstandings and unsafe situations. If you have little ones, it's essential to educate your children on how to have safe, respectful interactions with the animals in their lives.

Pet Etiquette

Whether a child shares a home with an animal or not, they will benefit from learning pet etiquette as there is a strong chance they will encounter or interact with an animal outside the home.

For pets outside the home, children should learn to ask permission before interacting with any pet, as some animals may not feel comfortable around new people. Once permission is granted, show them how to use gentle touches – a soft, steady hand to pet the animal along its side, chest, or back. Sensitive areas like the face, belly, tail, and paws should generally be avoided. Each species may have its own preferences; for instance, many cats enjoy



gentle touches on the forehead and face, whereas most dogs are uncomfortable with direct touches to the face.

For pets living in a child's home, teach them how to recognize an animal's need for space. Pets should be left alone when they are resting, eating, or not feeling well because approaching a pet during these vulnerable moments can make them feel defensive or anxious. In general, children should learn how to read cues from a pet during interactions as pets can change their minds about wanting to be petted or played with. Check out these additional resources by NOCO Humane's Behavior Team on how to better read a dog and cat's body language.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Secret Language of Dogs:



The Secret Language of Cats:



While it can be natural for children to want to express affection with hugs or kisses, animals may not enjoy such close contact. Instructing kids to keep their faces away from a pet's mouth and to refrain from hugging helps prevent accidental bites or discomfort for the animal.

When it comes to play time, climbing or riding on pets is unsafe and distressing for the animal. Avoid playing chase games as this can be frightening or overstimulating. Pets should never be cornered or crowded as feeling trapped can provoke an aggressive response. Lastly, many animals are startled by loud sounds, so using an "inside voice" helps to create a calm environment.

Before adopting a pet, consider how well they fit with your family and lifestyle. A few important characteristics to consider are species, breed, size, age, energy level/exercise requirements, level of care/training needed, and behavior history. To assist with your decision, NOCO Humane conducts behavior and medical assessments for each animal in our care, and may make specific recommendations based on our observations to help potential adopters make informed, responsible adoption decisions.

Bite Prevention and How to Handle a Bite

Most accidental bites involving children occur with a pet they know or live with. While images we see online of children pressed close to animals might appear endearing, animal behavior experts caution that even well-behaved pets can unintentionally cause harm when they feel uncomfortable. The four main reasons a pet will bite are: fearfulness or anxiety, in pain or ill, resource guarding (food, toy, etc.), and feeling overwhelmed.

In the rare case that a bite does occur, calmly separate the child and pet, and once the situation is under control, care for the bite wound. For severe bites, seek immediate medical attention. Importantly, animal bites that break the skin must be reported to your local animal control department - call animal control dispatch and they will provide guidance on next steps. If you live in Larimer County, contact NOCO Humane's Animal Protection & Control at 970.226.3647 ext. 7.

Reflecting on what might have triggered the bite is valuable, helping to identify patterns or stressors that may need to be managed differently in the future. For further guidance on handling

such situations safely, contact NOCO Humane's Behavior Hotline at 970.226.3647 ext. 5130.

How Parents and Caregivers Can Help

Educating children about pet etiquette and staying safe is an ongoing endeavor. Regularly engage kids with age-appropriate pet safety lessons using books, infographics, videos, or even role-playing to make learning fun and memorable. Modeling respectful behavior yourself also sets a strong example, giving children a clear visual on how to approach pets with respect and kindness. To support your pet, create a dedicated, kid-free space they can retreat to when they do feel overwhelmed or overly anxious.

With the right guidance and education, pets and children can be lifelong friends. Safety and wellbeing start with understanding pet etiquette, teaching children to interact safely, and creating a home environment where both kids and pets can feel safe, happy, and loved.

Special thanks to volunteer Kiyoka Tamesue, PSM, KPA CTP, for her assistance with research and expertise.



Critter Camp

NOCO Humane's Humane Education Program runs a series of Critter Camps throughout the year, designed to provide youth with experiential learning, hands-on activities, and engaging lesson plans, all in the world of animal welfare and our beloved pets.



Creating a Safe Space for your Pet

THE IMPORTANCE OF PET DENTAL HEALTH

BY DR. SLAYTER, DVM – NOCO HUMANE SHELTER VETERINARIAN

As a veterinarian, I see firsthand how crucial dental health is for pets' overall well-being. Much like humans, dogs and cats are prone to plaque, tartar buildup, and gum disease if their teeth aren't well-maintained. Over time, poor dental care can lead to pain, infection, and even complications that affect the heart and other vital organs. In this article, I'll share some effective ways to care for your pet's oral health, how to recognize signs of dental issues, and why it's vital to stay ahead of dental disease.

Ways to Maintain Your Pet's Dental Health

The best way to support your pet's dental health is with regular veterinary care. Scheduling an anesthetized dental cleaning every few years allows veterinarians to thoroughly remove plaque and tartar below the gumline, which helps prevent bacteria and tartar from eroding the bone structure. Though cost can be a concern, many clinics offer wellness plans to spread the cost over time, making dental care more accessible.

Between these professional cleanings, there are steps you can take at home to maintain your pet's oral health. Daily brushing with pet-safe toothpaste and a pet-safe brush is one of the most effective methods; just remember, human toothpaste and toothbrushes should be avoided. Patience is key here, as many pets may need time to get used to the process.

Additional options include adding pet-safe oral rinses without artificial sweeteners to their water and providing daily dental chews labeled "VOHC Accepted." The VOHC label indicates the chew has been clinically tested to reduce plaque and tartar (learn more at [VOHC.com](https://www.vohc.com)). Speaking of chews, be mindful of how hard the toy or bone your pet is chewing on. The bones in an animal's body are softer than a nylon bone or a really stiff antler, and can potentially fracture your pet's tooth, which would need to be taken care of right away. A helpful rule of thumb I like to go by: if your fingernail doesn't make an indent on the item, it's likely too hard for your pet's teeth.

Signs and Symptoms of Poor Dental Health

Common signs that your pet's dental health may be declining include red or swollen gums, yellow or brown tartar on the teeth, receding gumlines, and foul-smelling breath. To distinguish normal bad breath from dental disease, examine your pet's mouth for other potential signs as noted above.

Behavioral changes can also signal dental issues. Reduced appetite, preference for softer foods, reluctance to chew or play, or withdrawal from social activities may indicate discomfort. Dogs may shy away from chew toys, while cats may hide more frequently or become lethargic. Cats may even favor dry food as the crunch can be soothing on inflamed gums.



Poor Dental Health Impacts Overall Health

Dental disease is painful for pets, and left untreated, it can impact their health. Pain from dental issues can cause a decrease in appetite, leading to malnutrition and weight loss. More seriously, dental infections can enter the bloodstream, potentially damaging the heart and other organs.

Our shelter sees many pets in need of dental care. In 2024 alone, NOCO Humane performed 252 dental surgeries for dogs and cats (as of November 22). One of those animals was Jasper, a 12-year-old longhaired Dachshund. Upon arrival, his medical evaluation determined he was in dire need of dental care due to severe root exposure and gum recession. It was apparent that he received little to no dental care throughout his lifetime. Due to his old age, we also detected a heart murmur, which made the dental surgery more complicated as we were concerned how he would do under anesthesia. While Jasper had access to exceptional care and resources at NOCO Humane, his dental care expenses would have cost more than \$2,000 if this were at a private clinic. Jasper's story serves as a reminder that consistent dental care can prevent painful, costly issues down the line.

Preventative medicine is a passion of mine because, not only is it easier and cost-effective in the long run, it is a humane approach to caring for our pets and ensuring their wellbeing. Consistent and proper dental care is a great way to prevent discomfort and complications down the road, not to mention fresher breath when they give you lots of kisses! Thank you for caring, and join me in staying on top of our pet's dental health.

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970.226.3647

WELD CAMPUS

1620 42nd St
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970.506.9550

MISSION

To further the compassionate, safe, and responsible relationship between animals and people.

VISION

NOCO Humane is a trusted, responsive community leader, providing programs and services essential to the high quality of life for animals and people in northern Colorado.

ABOUT NOCO HUMANE

NOCO Humane is an independent nonprofit agency. We are not a division of any county or city and are not funded by any national animal-welfare organizations. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation and we are governed by a volunteer board of directors.

NOCOHUMANE.ORG