



## Dental Care for Small Ruminants

Dental care for small ruminants, such as goats and sheep, is essential for maintaining their overall health and well-being. These animals rely on their teeth to effectively chew and break down their food, aiding in proper digestion and nutrient absorption. Over time, improper wear or dental issues like broken teeth, infections, or misalignments can lead to difficulty eating, weight loss, and malnutrition. Regular dental checkups and timely interventions, such as floating (filing) teeth or extracting problematic teeth, help ensure that these animals can graze properly and maintain their body condition.

In addition to maintaining proper eating habits, good dental health in small ruminants can prevent painful conditions like gum disease or tooth abscesses, which can lead to systemic infections if left untreated. Routine monitoring for any signs of discomfort, such as drooling, difficulty chewing, or weight loss, can help catch dental problems early, ensuring that the animal receives appropriate care. Taking proactive measures to maintain dental health can also reduce the need for more invasive treatments and prolong the life of small ruminants by helping them thrive in their natural grazing and browsing environments.

- 1. Regular Check-ups by a Veterinarian:** It is essential to have your animals' teeth checked regularly by a veterinarian, particularly if you notice signs of dental discomfort such as drooling, difficulty eating, or a change in behavior. Routine exams can help catch dental problems early before they lead to more severe issues.
- 2. Monitor for Signs of Dental Issues:** Be on the lookout for symptoms like bad breath, weight loss, excessive salivation, or trouble chewing and swallowing. If your animal is avoiding hard food or showing signs of discomfort while eating, it may be time for a dental check-up.
- 3. Proper Diet and Grazing:** Ensure that your animals are provided with a natural and appropriate diet that allows for proper teeth wear. For goats, alpacas, and llamas, providing a high-fiber diet, including hay and forage, can help keep their teeth healthy by promoting natural grinding and wear.
- 4. Dental Floating:** If necessary, a veterinarian may perform a procedure called "floating," where they smooth and file down overgrown or sharp teeth to prevent discomfort or injury. This is especially important for older animals or those with dental malocclusions (misaligned teeth).

