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Dear Dr. Kay ...

by Dr. Nancy Kay



Q: My granddog's teeth are in such bad shape that I'm afraid he'll lose them. The last time Martini had them cleaned under anesthesia, he was out of it for days. He refuses to chew rawhide products to help control tartar. What can I do?

—Cindy Hantz, Walnutport, Pa.

A: Sounds like Martini needs a vet who specializes in dentistry (find one in your area through the [American Veterinary Dental College](#)). Different anesthetic drugs may allow the vet to perform a cleaning without leaving your [Yorkie](#) loopy. And get clear instructions for maintaining your dog's dental health between cleanings. Routine brushing (performed with a gauze-covered finger rather than a toothbrush), certain types of chew toys and prescription diets designed to reduce tartar formation are all good options.

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Q: Our best friend, 11-year-old Lucky, licks his paws or the

carpet continuously. Why? And how can we stop it?

—Maggie and Paul, via e-mail

A: Many dogs with skin allergies lick their paws; Lucky's taste for berber may just be a quirky habit. But I have seen this behavior in some dogs with [Cushing's disease](#), a hormonal imbalance caused by an overproduction of cortisone. The best way to keep him from licking (and preserve your sanity) is to work with your veterinarian to determine the underlying cause. Your vet may put Lucky on a novel protein diet for a trial period or try skin or blood testing to uncover allergic tendencies. Specific tests that measure blood cortisol levels can rule in or rule out Cushing's disease.

Q: My kitty has a cold. Can you recommend any natural remedies to help unstuff BabyGirl's stuffy nose?

—Cynthia French, Glendale, Calif.

A: A couple of human tricks may help your cat breathe easier. Steam therapy—enclosing your kitty in a steamy bathroom for 10 to 15 minutes—and applying a couple of drops of human saline nasal liquid daily might provide relief. Stuffiness and sneezing are usually viral in origin and must run their course, which can take up to a week or more. If your kitty is not eating or drinking well or appears lethargic, a follow-up discussion with your vet is in order.

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