

I live and practice in Ontario and so am bound by the Veterinarian's Act and the regulations of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario. As such, I am prohibited from endorsing any product in media directed at the lay public. The CUSP is written to and for veterinarians but is available on my website which is public access. What follows are not product endorsements. It is factual information that I have gathered and offer to you so that you can decide for yourself.

HealthyMouth® Water Additive

Those who have followed The CUSP or my comments on [VIN](#) know I am no big fan of 'products'. Most of the things sold with a claim of being of value in the improvement or maintenance of oral health are not worth the package they come in. Most have no research to back their claims, many make claims that are outlandish and irresponsible. For more details on this, you may wish to review these papers:

[Home Care Concepts](#)

[Why Antimicrobials are of so Little Value](#)

On the other hand, there are some products on the market that have a demonstrable value when understood and used appropriately. Many of these have the [VOHC](#) Seal of Acceptance for helping to control tartar and/or plaque. If you understand the causes of periodontal disease, you know that controlling plaque is vastly more important than controlling tartar, so products with a valid plaque claim should be valued far more than those that only help control tartar.

Most of the VOHC accepted products are diets or edible treats that work either mechanically or by the addition of various anti-tartar chemicals sprayed on to the surface.

A large segment of the home care product line that includes a number of bogus or unproven products is the food/water additive category. I won't bore you now with all the issues I have with this category of products and the companies that market them. Rather, I would like to focus on one product in this category.

healthymouth™ is the first (and as of June 2011) the only) product of its sort to receive the VOHC seal of acceptance for plaque control. The dog water additive concentrate received the seal in 2008. The cat water additive and the dog and cat topical gels (to be released in the summer of 2011) received acceptance in April 2011.

HealthyMouth LLC was founded by Karen Albert. She heard of my skepticism about products and so she sent me a package of information and invited me to visit her at her exhibit booth at the Veterinary Dental Forum in 2009. I read the material with an open mind then had several chats with Karen over the weekend. We have been in touch several times since as well.

Karen saw the value of getting VOHC acceptance and so got the research done and jumped through the hoops to make it happen. I have read the papers that were produced and the numbers are impressive with a dramatic reduction in plaque accumulation when the product was used.

The **healthymouth™** ingredient panel is water, glycerin, plant extracts, vitamins and zinc. There are no synthetic chemicals, pharmaceuticals or alcohol. Now, just because something is "all natural" or plant-based does not mean it is safe or healthy (tobacco and hemlock for example), but I see nothing in **healthymouth™** that causes me concern.

Karen acknowledges, accepts and even actively promotes that **healthymouth™** is but one part of a comprehensive oral care plan that includes appropriate diet, tooth brushing and regular professional care under general anesthesia provided by a veterinarian. There is no pretense or implication that **healthymouth™** treats established dental disease and no suggestion that it replaces any other component of the oral care program. Rather it is positioned as an adjunct to everything else the owners and veterinary team can and should be doing to foster optimum oral health.

I have long said that dental home care is not an over-the-counter concept. By this I mean that developing an appropriate oral care program is not something that should be left to the pet owner. They need professional assistance to select and understand the home care products and strategies that would be suitable for their pet. Karen believes this as well and so her goal is for **healthymouth™** to be sold only through veterinary clinics. In these early days, while she is establishing a distribution network she will

sell directly to pet owners from her website if their veterinarian is not carrying the product.

www.healthymouth.com has been redesigned as of August, 2010 and further updates are planned to emphasize the need for owners to work with their veterinarian and to offer educational and other resources for owners and veterinarians. This site is not just about moving product. It is about improving awareness of proper oral care for companion animals. This re-launched site still has a few typos and minor hiccups (but so does mine and it has been around for 10 years). I have not yet had a chance to review every page and link, but so far, I think the site is very informative and accurate.

So, we have a product seemingly devoid of harmful or controversial ingredients, with some valid research and VOHC acceptance for plaque control being marketed by a company that understands and promotes the importance of a multi-faceted approach.

When dispensing **healthymouth**TM, I explain how to mix the concentrate in water and so forth. Since it is a water additive and changes the colour and flavour of the water slightly it should be introduced gradually by putting a bit of treated water in plain water for a few days and day-by-day, increase the proportion of treated water. It might take two weeks to make the complete conversion for some dogs and cats.

My assessment (and that of the VOHC) is that, while there are no miracle products out there, **healthymouth**TM water additives and topical gels may be a valuable tool in the ongoing effort to maintain good oral hygiene and periodontal health when used as part of a comprehensive oral care program.