PERFECT FIT

DOES MY CAT HAVE BAD BREATH?



DOES MY CAT HAVE BAD BREATH?

Has your cat got bad breath? Living in close quarters with your pet means you may get a whiff of cat food breath now and again. However, your cat’s breath shouldn’t smell too strongly unless they have just eaten or groomed themselves, so you should note any particularly bad breath in cats. The medical term for bad breath in cats is halitosis and we will explore all the potential causes within this article.

Causes of bad breath in cats

There are many reasons cats and kittens may have bad breath. Some will be easy issues to resolve, such as diet, whilst others may require a trip to your vet for dental care, such as teeth cleaning or plaque removal. Bad breath could also be a sign of a more serious underlying illness, so it is important not to ignore persistent changes or worsening of your cat’s smelly breath.

Dental Issues

There are different causes for a cat’s bad breath, some of which are common, whereas others can require a visit to your vet. Cats and kittens can be susceptible to dental and oral issues, affected by diet, illness, oral hygiene, injury or trauma to the mouth.

- Plaque buildup can make a cat's mouth smell. Look for the signs of plaque (a white sticky substance on the surface of the tooth) which hardens to form yellow/brown tartar if not removed daily. You may also see swollen, red or inflamed gums.
- Any changes in your cat's breath or mouth odour should be checked by a vet.

Food and diet

Your pet’s diet is often one of the most important factors at play. Strong smelling foods, such as fish, can affect how your cat’s breath smells significantly.

Dietary Factors:

- For a short time after eating, wet cat food can be smelt on a cat's breath, which tends to happen less with dry food. Including wet food in a cat's daily diet is great though for their overall hydration and health.
- Always choose a high-quality food that is complete, balanced and tailored for the life stage of your cat. It's important to switch your cat's diet gradually, introducing increasing amounts of the new food over 5-7 days to avoid causing digestive upset.
- Foods with strong odours can affect your cat’s breath too. Fish and seafood varieties of wet food often smell more strongly than meat-based flavours, particularly immediately after eating.
- Food scavenged or hunted when outdoors may also affect their breath temporarily. Eating other animals, old food scraps and other difficult-to-digest titbits can cause smelly breath in cats.
- Dehydration can also contribute to smelly breath in cats. Your cat must always have access to fresh drinking water to help them keep their mouth clean and maintain good hydration.

Other Causes of bad breath in cats

The causes of your cat’s bad breath may be indicative of infection, respiratory problems or more serious health issues, particularly if it comes on suddenly. If the problem persists a vet should always be consulted to ensure the health and happiness of your cat.

- Illness or vomiting can cause bad breath in cats. Their breath may be especially pungent and can even smell like faeces if the cause is down to certain digestive issues. If your cat is also acting unusually, refusing to eat or drink, is not going to the toilet and is appearing unwell, bad breath could be a sign of bowel obstruction which is a medical emergency. Trust your instincts and contact a vet at the earliest opportunity if a bowel obstruction is suspected.
- If a cat’s breath smells sweet, or has an ammonia-like odour, kidney disease could possibly be the cause. If a cat’s kidneys are not working properly they are unable to filter waste from the blood effectively, which can lead to pungent smelling breath.
- Liver disease can also cause bad breath in cats as toxins build up in their blood. Some owners have described the smell as sweet, foul-smelling or musty. This condition is also known as foetor hepaticus, and will require urgent medical attention.
- Diabetes is another serious health issue that can cause bad breath for your cat. If your cat's breath smells fruity, it could indicate diabetes. Feline diabetes is a treatable disease, and with the right care, treatments and diet cats can usually lead normal lives.
- Oral health issues, such as a foreign body lodged in the mouth or throat, gum disease, fractured teeth, growths, ulcers, infection, tumours, injury or trauma could also be causing the cat's mouth to smell.

Ultimately, there are numerous potential causes of bad breath in cats, many of which are treatable with the right care. If you notice a persistent smell from your cat's mouth, it is

essential to visit the vet for a health check.

Treatment of bad breath in cats

Wondering how to deal with your cat’s smelly breath? Check out our top tips below to help ease your nostrils and improve your cat’s oral and overall health.

Change their food

- Adding dry food kibbles to a cat's diet can help to freshen breath, as the more abrasive texture helps clean the surface of the tooth as the cat eats. Mixed feeding, offering both wet and dry food every day, is a healthy way to feed a cat. Always choose complete and balanced food, tailored to the life stage and lifestyle of your cat, to make sure all their nutritional needs are being met.
- You could consider avoiding extra-smelly food, such as fish, to also help improve a cat’s smelly breath. As fish is high in lean protein and Omega 3, it can be highly beneficial to a cat’s diet, so if you do choose to tailor their diet to purely meat-based alternatives you may need to supplement their food with a multivitamin.

Use cat dental treats and brush their teeth

- You can brush your cat's teeth and/or use a cat flosser. Although it may take some getting used to, it can really help to tackle oral hygiene issues. Including dry cat food in their diet, plus scientifically proven cat dental treats, can help improve their bad breath. There are also dental toys which can help. If you have a kitten, try to begin your oral care routine when they are young so they become used to it!
- Additionally, trips to your vet to have your cat's mouth checked or teeth professionally cleaned periodically will help ensure that your cat maintains good oral health.

Vet Treatment

- Ask your vet about other treatment options that they can offer, and the best oral care practices that you can perform at home to alleviate any issues causing bad breath - particularly if they are the result of a more serious condition.

Conclusion: Bad breath in cats

Whilst no cat owner expects their pet to have minty-fresh breath, their mouth shouldn’t smell too strongly unless they’ve recently finished eating or grooming themselves. Persistent bad breath in cats, known as halitosis, is worth keeping an eye (or a nose) on. Simple fixes include incorporating dry food alongside cat dental treats and a robust oral care routine, and making sure your cat always has access to fresh, clean water at all times.

If your cat is a keen hunter, temporarily bad breath may be down to something they’ve consumed in the wild, but all the more reason to check their mouth and gums to make sure nothing is stuck and there are no signs of injury. Severe bad breath could also be caused by dental problems, diabetes or liver and kidney disease, so it shouldn’t be ignored. Schedule a check-up with your vet if you suspect there may be a more serious underlying cause for your cat’s bad breath.

FAQs

All Questions Does My Cat Have Bad Breath?

Filter by

- All Questions
- Does My Cat Have Bad Breath?

1. **Why does my cat’s breath smell so bad?**

   Your cat’s breath smells may be caused by pungent food, tooth decay or dehydration, so don’t panic - some easy diet or oral care routine changes could help. However, it can also be a sign of more serious health concerns, such as dental problems, diabetes, liver issues or kidney disease, so it’s important to keep an eye on them. If your cat's breath is constantly smelling foul, schedule a check-up with your vet if you suspect there may be a more serious underlying cause.

2. **What should I give my cat for bad breath?**

   Incorporating dry food into your cat's diet and feeding them scientifically proven cat oral care treats is the easy solution to help improve bad breath. Avoid particularly strong-smelling cooked or raw foods. A daily oral care routine is also a great way to stop bad breath in cats. You can brush your cat's teeth and tongue and use dental treats to help improve their bad breath. There are also dental toys which can help. Additionally, trips to visit your vet to have your cat's mouth examined or professionally cleaned will help maintain good oral health for your cat.

3. **What does a cat’s breath smell like with kidney failure?**

   Kidney disease could be the cause of sweet, ammonia-scented or fruity bad breath in cats. Kidney disease is a serious health concern that can be chronic or acute, so make sure to contact your vet for a check-up if you suspect your cat’s bad breath smells unusually sweet or has a hint of a bleach-like scent. The earlier that kidney problems are detected may make them easier to treat with diet and medications, preventing kidney failure in cats.

4. **What is halitosis a symptom of in cats?**

   Halitosis is the medical term for bad breath in cats and is generally associated with dental issues causing a build-up of bacteria in the mouth and tongue, as well as plaque on their teeth. Rotting food stuck between teeth can also be the cause, as well as dental tumours or other oral health conditions. This is why a strong oral care routine for your cat is key to keeping their teeth and gums healthy whilst combating bad breath. Brushing your cat’s teeth, adding some dry food to their diet and giving them dental treats or special dental toys can help to combat halitosis in cats. It’s also essential to give them access to fresh water at all times to make sure they don’t become dehydrated. Additionally, regular trips to your vet to have your cat's mouth examined or professionally cleaned will help maintain good oral health for your cat.

   SEE ALL

SEE ALL POPULAR ARTICLES

Source URL: *https://www.perfect-fit.co.uk/cat-advice/health/causes-of-bad-breath-in-cats*