



SCOTTISH TERRIER CLUB OF AMERICA

Puppy Dentition

One of the finest articles on puppy dentition is found in a little paperback book, Dogs, Kennels & Profits written by Bob Bartos when he was the director of Friskies Research Kennels at Carnation, Washington. For years I have had this book and thumbed through it but never really studied it because I didn't consider that I had a kennel or that I was "in dogs" to make a profit. I took out the book regularly just to admire the picture of Ch. Barden Bingo on the cover and dream of the day when I would own (or breed) something on a par with that great Scot. The book was copyrighted in 1972 but the advice is just as sound today - as I have been told by those who have done a lot of breeding.

As you no doubt know, the milk teeth loosen and drop out about the fourth month. It is important that attention is given to the pup's mouth long before the fourth month. It is important to notice the placement of the baby incisors and be prepared to anticipate problems before they arise. An underbite - or even a good bite - is no guarantee that it will be the same when the permanent teeth reach their final position. If the milk teeth do not come out on schedule, it can hinder the permanent teeth from reaching the desired positions.

An excerpt from Bob Bartos' book:

"A bad mouth can be forestalled and a good mouth retained by the following method: As dentition time approaches, between the third and fifth month, the upper incisors should be loosened and extracted before they are ready to come out by themselves. At the same time leave the lower incisors in place as long as possible. This results in the upper permanent teeth coming through quickly while retarding the lower. The upper teeth actually deflect the lowers. The working principle of this method is that permanent teeth, if hindered in their progress by a retained tooth, always deflect to the inner rather than the outer side of the mouth. All incisor teeth have a tendency to move forward in the jaw. To retain the lower incisors they must be effectively trapped or held in position by the upper permanent incisors until complete dentition is accomplished and the teeth are firmly anchored.

If the lower canine teeth are retained too long, they will force the adult canine tooth to hit the upper jaw and prevent the mouth from closing. Otherwise the lower incisors can move forward and not be trapped by the upper incisors, and an undershot bite will develop. Remove the lower deciduous canine teeth as soon as possible.

Many times seemingly hopeless cases of undershot mouths can be corrected during this period. There are puppies who have a perfect bite while carrying their deciduous teeth but end up undershot."