

## Causes of Bad Breath (Halitosis) in Dogs & Cats

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

**Q.** My pet has bad breath. What causes this?

**A.** Bad breath, medically termed 'halitosis,' is a common problem reported by pet owners. The most common cause of halitosis is some sort of dental problem. Bacteria, saliva, and food particles can form plaque, which causes bad breath. This can further develop into [gingivitis](#), or worse, periodontal disease, which will make the breath even more unpleasant.



In addition to dental problems, other causes of bad breath include:

- [Diabetes mellitus](#)
- Kidney disease
- Gastrointestinal disease, including cancers, obstructions, and certain infections
- Infections of areas around the mouth, such as the folds of the lips
- Respiratory disease, e.g.; some sinus infections
- Dietary "indiscretions," such as [eating stool](#) or spoiled garbage
- Other oral disease, such as [tonsillitis](#), cancer, trauma, and some autoimmune diseases

Any pet with bad breath should be examined by a veterinarian, unless you know it is caused by something the pet ate. Some causes of bad breath can cause severe and even fatal complications, if not treated promptly.