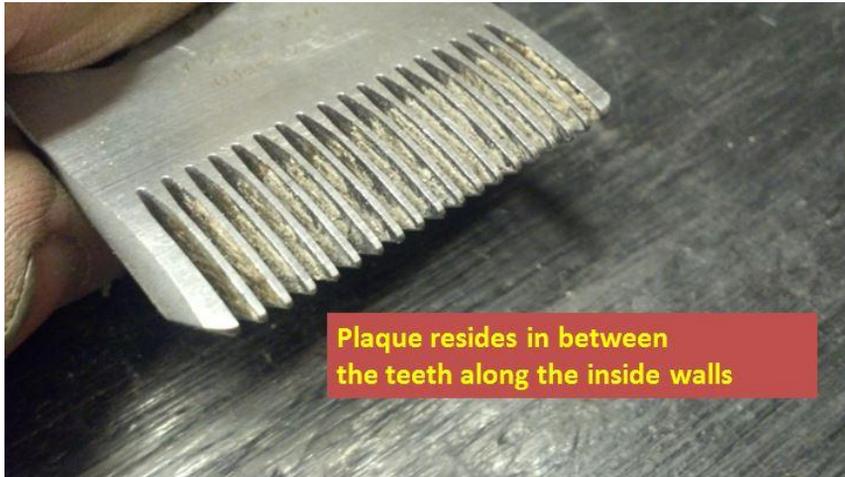


## Blade plaque. What is it?

Blade plaque is that stuff that sticks to the inside of the teeth on your clipper blades. Most don't pay attention to it, but in reality it's something you need to get and keep off your blades as part of your blade cleaning process.



What is it made of? Blade plaque is a combination of many things, all organic in nature from right off the dog's grooming. Dander, hair pieces, mold spores, soap scum, insect residue, insect eggs, and anything else that's in the coat, maybe wet shaving. It builds up from a foundation of moisture, and starts layering its self to a point where you can't get a blade through coat. I was taught in grooming school back in the 80's to make sure this stuff gets cleaned off because it slows the blade down, made sense to me!

There are other things about blade plaque you should be aware of, it's a media of food and shelter for bacteria as well as viruses. I bartered a groom job from a microbiologist at our local college, and told her I'd bring a blade into her that was full of this stuff and wanted her to analyze it. Well I did, and the results were shocking.

This microbiologist was able to take the media from the blade teeth and layer it vertically and horizontally. They did gram stains and cultures from every part of the media and found bacteria in every single part of the plaque. I then asked if this bacteria can live in every part of this media, can viruses? She said without hesitation that viruses can thrive in this organic media. She didn't test for virus because it wasn't part of the bartered job.

What about spray disinfectants? Over the counter spray disinfectants that a groomer can purchase contain a few common disinfectants in them. The few that come to mind are Phenylphenol, Triclosan, and Ethanol 2-butoxy. They all do a good job but they are "surface disinfectants" not contact killers like bleach. Bleach, and some other very controlled disinfectants you can get from the vet are contact killers, these surface disinfectants work over time. If you read the label of disinfectant you're using, it will tell you how long the product must remain wet on the blade for the disinfectant to work.

Will spray disinfectants work on blade plaque? Because they do a good job controlling microbes on the surface of your blades, I don't think they will get into the layers of blade plaque that could be hosting any harmful microbes. Now your spray disinfectant may control microbes on the surface of the blade plaque, but as you go to your next dog, the hair is going to scrape that top layer of blade plaque away exposing fresh media underneath it. If there is any microbes in the fresh media, there is a chance you can spread it to another dog. Common bacteria may not hurt anything because its everywhere in your shop, but what if a Parvo virus, or Kennel Cough virus are present in the media?

So what do we do with blade plaque? You clean it off. As a groomer, its your job to clean your blades when you go home or between dogs. Blade plaque only builds up if the blade isn't cleaned properly. Coolants that say the clean are worthless, what do they clean? There are ways of cleaning properly and effectively that are very fast and easy to do. The basic one is a toothbrush in blade wash. Take your blade and run a toothbrush between the teeth of your blades with a wash that has a disinfectant in it and you just cleaned and disinfected your blades. If you clean your blades properly between dogs or at the end of the day you will never see blade plaque. There shouldn't be anything sticking to the inside of the teeth on your blades. There are several other ways to clean effectively like your powerwasher in the tub, ultrasonic cleaners, ect. But you have to keep blade plaque from building up on your blades, it could benefit you one day down the road by preventing something from spreading through your shop.



Have a great day grooming, and read those labels!

Jeff