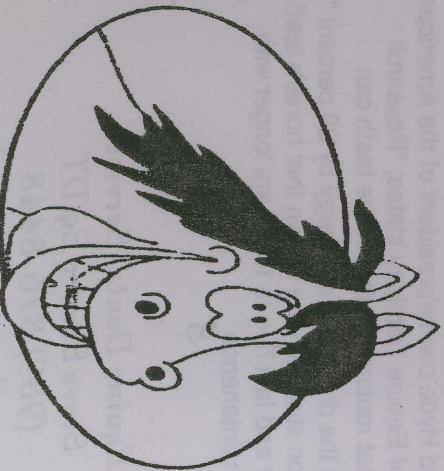


# Questions and Answers about Equine Dental Care



## When Should Equine Dental Care Begin ?

Foals should have their mouths examined soon after birth. This will allow for any problems, possibly congenital, to be dealt with and noted for future dental care.

## How Often Does my Horse or Pony need Dental Checkups ?

Routine dental care normally begins as a yearling with the removal or the wolf teeth and floating of sharp edges. After an initial visit by your equine dental technician, it is recommended that at least two visits per year be scheduled until five years of age when all the permanent teeth have erupted. After the age of five, the frequency of dental checkups is determined on an individual basis. Two visits per year are recommended!

## What are signs that a Horse Needs Dental Attention ?

The most obvious sign of dental problems is a change in chewing habits. The horse may dribble feed, wash feed in a water bucket, hold the head to one side when eating, or not eat at all. The horse may "quid" the food, in which the food (particularly hay) is rolled into balls rather than properly masticated. The balls of food are usually dropped to the ground. Rather than chew with a painful mouth the horse may instead swallow before chewing is complete. This may contribute to colic, choke, and indigestion. Other signs of dental trouble include the presence of excess saliva, halitosis, swelling of the face, refusal to eat hard grain and coarse hay, bolting of grain and a loss of condition. In certain situations some horses limit their intake of water, which may result in serious harm to their overall general condition. Often times it is necessary to serve individual horses with dental discomfort warm water during extreme cold temperature. Young and old horses are affected on an individual basis. A horse with dental problems may become very nervous and develop habits such as stall weaving or cribbing.

Under saddle, the horse may head toss, lug, rear and generally be unsettled and unwilling to perform correctly and consistently.

## What is the Function of the Incisors ?

The incisors allow the horse to obtain food.

## What is the Function of the Molars ?

The molars masticate the food for digestion.

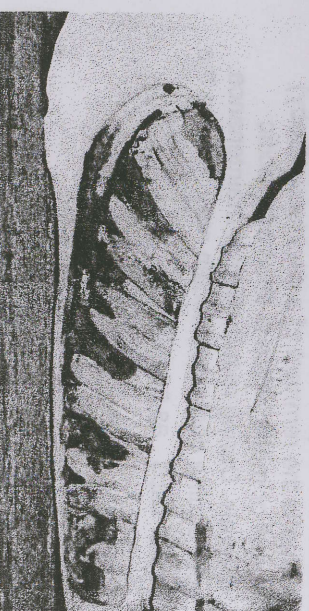
## Why do the molars get sharp edges and require floating ?

The upper jaw is normally wider than the lower jaw, allowing for a somewhat circular chewing motion, which involves a process known as lateral excursion. This motion allows for a grinding of feed stuffs, creating sharp edges on the outside (buccal) or cheek edge of the upper molars, and the inside edge of the lower molars. Many horses have sharp edges which require floating of the whole tooth surface. It is recommended that young horse's teeth are floated prior to biting. Do Incisors require regular dental maintenance ?

In some cases, as a result of injury or abnormal occlusion and wear, the incisors may require treatment. The incisors should be examined as part of regular dental maintenance.

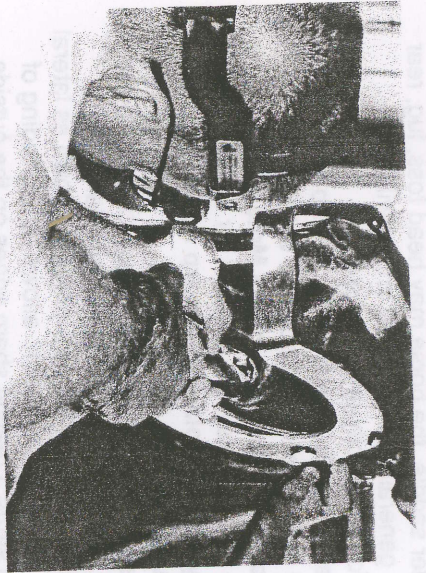
## What Are Wolf Teeth ?

Wolf teeth are vestigial teeth. They are normally noted forward of the first cheek tooth in the upper arcade, or lingual (set to the inside of the first cheek tooth) Wolf teeth may occur in the lower jaw as well as the upper jaw.



Lower Skull cutaway showing molar depth





EQ/DT Removing the 210 Molar

### **What are Blind Wolf Teeth?**

Blind Wolf teeth normally lie under the gingiva forward of the first cheek tooth. They are easily palpitated, and do not normally erupt. They may occur in the upper and lower jaw.

### **Why are wolf teeth removed?**

Many wolf teeth interfere with the function of the bit, and therefore should be removed as a part of regular dental maintenance. This should be done at an early age to ensure clean extraction and avoidance of unnecessary behavioral problems associated with biting pain.

### **What is a Cap?**

A Cap is the remnant of a deciduous (baby) incisor or molar which is shed at specific intervals. During regular dental maintenance, your equine dental technician may remove the cap or caps, as necessary.

### **Can Anyone Float a Horse's teeth?**

Many people know how to float a horse's teeth but that is only part of the job. Your horse needs a complete mouth examination and balance to function properly by a trained equine dental technician.

### **What is an Equine Dental Technician?**

Equine Dental technicians attend an intensive training school which they receive instruction in anatomy, and also hands on experience on horses. After completion of the training course, many equine dental technicians work under the supervision of more experienced dental technicians.

### **Do the procedures hurt my horse?**

Most horses accept and actually tend to enjoy having their teeth floated. Other horses may require some type or restraint, equine dental technicians are trained in gentle restraint methods. Should the horse need additional restraint or require a more difficult procedure your veterinarian should be contacted to arrange sedation.

### **Can You Sedate my Horse?**

Equine dental technicians are not veterinarians and do not carry sedation, if your equine dental technician believes that your horse will require sedation, your vet will need to be present or administer the sedation.

### **How Can I tell if my horse Needs Dental care?**

You may be able to tell by observing your horse, is he trying to tell you something, by his actions, is he acting up when bridling or riding, is he dropping feed, losing weight, does he have any visible sores in his mouth, does he chew to one side only? Horses can not tell their owners what is wrong or how they feel. Often times it is impossible to tell if your horse has dental problems with out an examination by an equine dental technician.

### **How is the examination Performed?**

The examination begins when the technician approaches the horse, they observe the body condition, examine the head for any signs of TMJ (Temporo-mandibular joint), the incisors are examined and a full mouth preculum is placed on the horses mouth so that the interior of the mouth and molars can be examined.

### **What happens after the exam?**

During the exam the equine dental technician will show you the areas your horse has problems with both visually and by touch. Then they will prepare a written estimate of the work to be done with a chart showing the areas to be worked on.

### **Can Everything be done at one time?**

Most horses can have all of their dental care done in one visit. There are cases when it is necessary to perform the procedures in a step by step procedure over several visits.

### **Are the Procedures Expensive?**

Often times a horse that has not had any prior dental care or it has been several years since it has had work performed will require additional procedures to put the whole mouth in balance. Once the mouth has been restored routine maintenance should be done every six months or on a yearly basis, depending on the horses age and use.

### **Why Have an Equine Dental technician work on my horse and not my vet?**

A check of most vet schools throughout the country showed that during their schooling most vets actually receive less than 10 hours of equine dental training. Ron Hildebrand DVM stated that many vets may be capable of performing equine dental procedures they prefer not to and welcome equine dental technicians.

**What are the benefits of routine dental care**  
Raymond Hyde owner/president of the American School of Equine Dentistry states: "Research shows that routine floating of the teeth can increase the digestible of energy by 20 percent." In addition studies have shown that horse's teeth will wear and last five to ten years longer with proper maintenance.

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