

Cambridge Equine Hospital

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Equine Dental Care

Regular dental care is widely recognised as being of great importance in all ages and breeds of horse. Horses have continuously erupting teeth which grow to replace the ongoing wear that occurs during normal grazing and chewing. The horse has two rows of teeth and the upper arcade is wider apart than the lower arcade. This means that many horses can develop enamel points on the outer edges of the upper molar teeth and the inner edges of the lower teeth. These enamel points are sharp, and may cause scratches and cuts in the cheek and tongue, resulting in pain and discomfort. The rate at which these points develop depends on the diet, age and rate of tooth wear or replacement.

Abnormal jaw or skull conformation, such as misalignment of the teeth from back to front, can lead to dental problems such as parrot mouth. Misaligned, overshot incisors can result in the development of dental overgrowths, or hooks, on the upper and lower molars at the front and back of the mouth, and loss of the smooth molar curve which causes grossly abnormal tooth growth and wear.

Dental abnormalities and disease can impair normal chewing motion as they restrict the sliding action of the jaws during eating. In severe cases, this may lead to quidding (dropping of food) and weight loss through reduced feed intake and poor mastication, or to other diseases caused by oral infections affecting other parts of the body, such as sinus infections. Early problems associated with dental problems are common and may involve poor performance and reluctance to accept the bit due to oral pain, halitosis or nasal discharge.

Dental problems can be prevented or treated easily in most cases, as long as they are identified early enough. An annual dental examination of the horse's mouth, using a speculum (gag), is essential, and can easily be combined with the yearly booster vaccination. Some horses with known problems may need preventative treatments more often than this, but many horses need little or no rasping at all. However, it is most important to check by thorough regular evaluation.

We perform all routine dentistry and dental surgery, molar extractions and x-rays of the skull. We may also treat other oral and sinus conditions that can be caused by dental disease.

Please contact us on **01223 760535** or email cambridgeequine@vet.cam.ac.uk to arrange routine dental treatment at your yard or to discuss any questions about the dental services available.
