



The Highest Quality Health Care for Your Horses

Serving South East Louisiana

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Healthy horses... successful clients

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Focusing on the health of our patients—Contributing to the enjoyment and success of our clients.

- ◆ Preventive Care
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EQUINE DENTISTRY

Is your horse: Dropping food? Throwing his head when you are riding? Fighting the bit or resisting being bridled?

These are all symptoms of possible dental problems

Well, its time to talk about equine dentistry . . . It is very important to include a complete oral and dental exam as part of the general physical exam each time a horse is seen by the veterinarian. Keeping your dental schedule consistent and frequent, you can ensure that your horse retains his teeth up to 5 years longer than horses that do not have regular dental care.

WEANLING DENTISTRY

(Birth to 18 months)

Dental check-up for foals are both necessary and helpful. Horses of this age should be examined for any congenital defects and evaluated for proper eruption sequence and alignment of incisors. A newborn foal should have his teeth checked for abnormalities that may interfere with nursing. Most dental malocclusions can be corrected or at least not allowed to worsen as the foal grows by simply floating the premolars to prevent hooks from forming, leveling, and shortening the incisors to prevent jaw locking.

YOUNG PERFORMANCE HORSE DENTISTRY

(18 months to 3 years)

Young horses are asked to begin responding to a bit at the time when their mouths are most actively changing. A dental exam prior to starting a youngster in training is of great benefit. During this 3-year period, all of the deciduous teeth (baby teeth) are shed and 36 to 44 permanent teeth erupt.

Teeth, lip and mouth pain make it difficult for a horse trying to learn cues from a bit. Wolf teeth can also cause biting problems and should be removed before the horse is bitted.

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Cont. YOUNG PERFORMANCE HORSE DENTISTRY

All young horses should have biannual oral examinations. Horses that are shedding caps may need to be seen more often.

ADULT PERFORMANCE DENTISTRY

(4-10 years)

The adult horse should have a full set of permanent teeth. Most horses this age have already been exposed to training and biting. Most problems are easy to correct and manage during this time of a horse's life. This age group should have annual dental examinations. The teeth need floating and the edge of the cheek teeth should be rounded to create a bit seat. Hooks should be removed.

SYMPTOMS OF EQUINE DENTAL PROBLEM

- Excessive salivation and loss of feed from the mouth while eating, or difficulty chewing.
- Loss of body weight and general condition.
- Noticeable undigested feed particles (long stems or whole grain) in manure.
- Fighting the bit, excessive head tossing, bit chewing, tongue lolling, or resistance to being bridled.
- General poor performance, failing to turn or stop, even bucking.
- Foul odor from one or both nostrils.
- Traces of blood from the mouth.
- Nasal discharge or swelling of the face, jaw, or mouth tissues.

*You can check to see if a horse's teeth are sore by using the heel of your hand to gently push into the muscle located three inches below and just in front of the eye. The horse will flinch and jerk its head upward if this area is tender or inflamed. Because some horses adapt to discomfort and pain, it is also important to watch closely for signs of dental problems.