7 REASONS WHY YOUR HORSE NEEDS A YEARLY DENTAL

YOU WILL LEARN

7 signs your horse is due for a dental
4 most common myths about the powerfloat
The health risks related to poor dental care
ANNUAL DENTAL

The 7 signs your horse is due for their annual dental examination

Regular dental care is fundamental to your horse’s health, wellbeing and performance. We outline the 7 signs that indicate your horse is due for their yearly dental.

1 DROPPING FEED

The first most obvious sign that your horse is due for a dental examination is dropping feed, also known as quidding.

2 LOSING WEIGHT

Horses can lose weight due to poor dental care for two reasons.

The first one is because it hurts to eat, so they don’t. Some horses can pack food between their gums and teeth to give them some padding while eating. They can often look like a chipmunk storing food for the Winter with big bulges appearing along the sides of their face.

The other reason horses lose weight is they lack enzymes in their saliva so, when they swallow the food, it needs to be in very small particulate sizes for the enzymes in the stomach to digest it. If it is not small enough, the enzymes can’t release enough nutrients from the food before it passes through. Therefore, the nutrients simply pass through your horse, thus wasting your money. You have to feed 2-3 times as much to help your horse get the nutrients it needs from their food.

3 COLIC

A lack of chewing can also lead to colic because the bacteria in the intestines are made to work harder to digest food. The harder they work, the more gas they release, which leads to a gas colic.

If you have ever had a horse with gas colic, it is quite frightening to see your horse throwing themselves around and rolling, potentially twisting their bowel and requiring costly surgery.

4 CHOKE

This is another emergency situation when your horse doesn’t chew their food properly. The food can end up going down their trachea, or wind pipe, rather than the oesophagus. If not treated correctly, choke can lead to an aspiration pneumonia, meaning food material ends up in the lungs and your horse becomes very sick, with a lengthy recovery.
BEHAVIOURAL ISSUE

Another problem can present itself when riding. Your horse resents the bit or refuses to stop when asked; they can become ‘head strong’ and even resent being saddled up because they know it’s going to hurt.

Head collection can also be problematic if your horse has hooks at the last tooth at the back, which means your horse is physically unable to arch their neck correctly.

The reason it will be hurting is horses have teeth that keep growing throughout their lives and, if not looked after with an annual dental, they can grow sharp points on the outer edges of their upper arcades with normal every day diets, causing cutting of the gums, tongue and cheeks.

REDUCED JAW MOVEMENT

Without proper dental care, teeth can fall out and the corresponding upper or lower tooth overgrows, causing problems when the horse tries to grind their food. This then prevents them from chewing their food properly or long enough, which can lead to emergency situations, such as choke and colic.

CHRONIC DIARRHOEA

Chronic diarrhoea is due to the inability to chew food correctly. Over time, the lining of the intestines become thickened and irritable, due to high nutrient food passing through the digestive system too quickly.

When you look at horses in the wild, their average lifespan is 21, with most dying from starvation - not from lack of food, but poor dental care. The horse is physically unable to eat, due to poor teeth or the inability to physically chew from side to side. The other reason is their teeth fall out and they can’t chew fibrous grasses properly to release the nutrients from it.
POWERFLOATS

The 4 most common myths about the dental powerfloat debunked

All of our veterinarians have been trained in advanced dental care and are competent at powerfloat dentistry. We debunk the most common myths about this important tool.

1. A GAG IS NOT REQUIRED TO PERFORM A DENTAL ON A HORSE

A gag, also called a speculum, is a metal contraption that opens the mouth and keeps it open. If a gag isn’t used, the teeth cannot be checked correctly. Often, in an adult horse, the back teeth can be up to 40cm into their mouth. This means you need to have the appropriate equipment to open your horses mouth and prevent their mouth from closing.

2. A HIGH SPEED SPINNING GRINDING WHEEL GENERATES A LOT OF HEAT THAT WILL DAMAGE THE TOOTH, LEADING TO TOOTH LOSS AND TOOTH DEATH OVER TIME.

While it can, indeed, happen this is another case of a problem that is avoided with knowledge and training. There is a limit to the amount of time spent grinding an individual tooth. It is important to respect that time limit when working on a single tooth, especially if the tooth needs significant reduction. If necessary, water can be used to cool the tooth during the procedure.

3. POWERFLOATS WILL BOLT OUT OF CONTROL AND GRIND OFF AN ENTIRE TOOTH IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. THE TOOTH WILL DIE AND A MULTIITUDE OF TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES WILL ENSURE.

It does take some effort to remove the desired amount of tooth. When there is a lot of tooth to remove, such as with large hooks, steps etc., it may have to be done in stages.

A few millimeters today, then a few more in 3-4 months, until the tooth is returned to normal. Taking off too much doesn’t happen easily, you have to work at it. An understanding of the anatomy of the horse’s tooth and the simple rules of floating greatly reduce the risk of over floating and any ill effects that could result.
Having spent most of her childhood in the saddle, it was a natural transition into equine veterinary medicine for Louise, founder of Exclusively Equine Veterinary Services. A practicing equine vet, Louise is passionate about empowering horse owners, like you, with a deeper understanding of horse health, so you can give your horse a longer, healthier future.

If you have any questions regarding your horse, you’re welcome to contact me personally.

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A DENTAL POWERFLOAT WILL HURT MY HORSE

The reality is powerfloating is, generally, a bloodless procedure. The carbide or diamond grinding wheel works very well on enamel, but is essentially harmless to the cheeks and gums. I can even hold my thumb over the spinning wheel and, to this day, I still have fingerprints!

Trauma is also reduced due to the precise action of the powerfloat. I can place the tool exactly where I want it to work, as opposed to the long stroking action required with handfloats. If you miss the target, with handfloats you will get blood.