

Good dental care is essential for your horse's general health. As part of your preventative care, horses should have a dental examination (with appropriate treatment performed) once a year. This can usually done at the time of their annual vaccinations. If your horse has dental abnormalities, then it maybe that dental treatment is recommended more regularly i.e. once every 6 months.

**Routine Dental Examinations** - A routine dental examination generally takes 30-60 minutes and involves your horse's mouth and teeth being examined closely by the vet. This is performed under sedation, as, with the advancements in equine dentistry, this will allow the vet to complete a thorough job and reduces any potential stress for the horse, vet and handler while reducing the chance of the horse making any sudden movements, which also reduces potential injuries for all concerned.



**Signs and symptoms of dental problems in horses?** - Sometimes horses may show very little in the way of obvious symptoms of dental disease until the disease is well established, hence why it is important to have regular dental examinations for your horse.

If your horse is showing any of the following signs it is highly suggestive that your horse is suffering from some form of dental disease:

- Dropping of food (quidding)
- Eating more slowly or preferring to eat soft feed rather than hay
- Pouching of food in the cheeks
- Halitosis (bad breath)
- Unilateral (one sided) nasal discharge
- Reluctance to accept the bit
- Poor performance

Apart from sharp enamel points and hooks, horses can also suffer from other more serious dental problems, such as an infection of the tooth root, a fractured tooth, a tooth that is growing in the wrong direction, or diastemata (food packing into spaces between the teeth). Your vet is the best and most qualified person to advise you on the most appropriate course of action for correcting your horse's dental problems, and of course your vet is also able to treat these important conditions and provide necessary medical treatment e.g. pain relief when needed.

**Advanced Dentistry** - All vets will be fully equipped with hand rasps , power floats (motorised rasps), headstands, dental gags and all the tools required for routine dentistry.

In some cases, further investigation and treatment with more advanced dentistry will be required. This may involve the use of an X-ray machine for performing dental radiographs or an oroscope (a camera to examine the horse's mouth). Wolf tooth removal, tooth extractions and diastema widening may also be required.



*Infundibular caries treated with fillings of the teeth*

*Dental radiographs*



*Oroscope being used to view inside of horses mouth*

The frequency of dental care really depends on the individual horse and its own individual requirements. Age and certain dental conditions may influence the frequency of dental examinations and treatment. However, it is a good idea to have your horse's teeth examined at least once a year.