

## Equine Dentistry

Over the last ten years, the current focus on equine dentistry has pushed the envelope beyond the fifteen- minute hand float of an unsettled unsedated horse. Strength, determination and the ability to dodge flying feet were more important than dental expertise. These days, horses are living longer due to the advancements in medicine. Proper equine dental health is helping play a role in that too.

Floating teeth is not just for the old horse. Too many older horses (18yrs+) are finding themselves with irreversible dental problems.

Mini's and ponies start earlier than that. Most people don't realize that the last tooth in a horse's mouth is just under the eye, this includes minis and ponies. Also, from birth to five years of age your horse will have had over forty teeth erupt, which includes the loss of deciduous (baby) teeth and their permanent counterparts growing in.

Your horse's dental care should be as big a part of its routine care as are vaccinations, deworming, and hoof care. To properly do this, a full mouth speculum is a must. This allows the veterinarian to examine each tooth, look for lacerations to the cheek, tongue, and gums, and the possible tumor that may show up. Some horses will tolerate this without sedation but because of the potential risks involved, all horses need to be sedated. While most of your horse's dental care needs can be met with hand floating alone, motorized equipment has paved the way to correcting more problems. Motorized equipment allows the veterinarian to do a better, faster, more complete job such as wave mouth corrections, bit seats, ramp and hook reductions to name a few. Depending on the age, temperament, and number of dental problems found, the whole procedure usually takes about thirty- forty minutes on average.

All equines should start their dental care around two years of age. This is especially true for minis and ponies. You, as owners, of these breeds need to understand that they have the same number and almost the same size of teeth as a full size horse. Problems in minis and ponies start sooner because of this.

If your horse's teeth haven't been properly examined in the last year and a half, it is time to have it done. Most horse's need their teeth floated only once a year. Rarely is there a need to have them done more often than that.

In order to perform the best job possible on the farm, a few things are needed from the owners.

The veterinarian will need electricity, water, and a clean stall in which to perform these procedures.

