

## Keeping Equine Teeth healthy and pain free

Equines are good at hiding pain. Considering recent studies which show that up to 70% of equines suffer with undiagnosed dental problems, it's important that equine owners keep a close eye on their equine's dental health. As a prey animal, dental pain has to become very severe before an equine will stop eating!

Good dental health means your four-legged friend can eat and enjoy life without pain. Regular dental checks will help prevent painful, and at times, life threatening issues.

We recommend dental checks every 6-12 months. For older equines, or those with abnormalities, this should be increased on the advice of your dental professional. Early detection of dental issues is essential for prompt and appropriate treatment to prevent pain and discomfort. Some treatments just won't work if the problem has gone on for too long.

These checks should be carried out by:

- A Veterinary surgeon
- an Equine Dental Technician registered with the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT)
- Category 2 members of the World Wide Association of Equine Dentists.

Sedation given by a veterinary surgeon can help your equine to relax during the check, and ensures that a thorough assessment is possible.

The benefits of regular dental checks:

- keeps your equine eating well
- keeps your equine's mouth pain free
- picks up problems at an earlier stage when they are more easily treatable
- reduces the chances of tooth loss and other problems in older age
- avoids issues with biting

If you have a foal, ensuring their teeth are aligned and erupting correctly is essential for preventing problems as they grow.

It is also important to have your youngster's teeth checked prior to biting. This avoids discomfort in the mouth and prevents potential negative behavioural responses associated with this.

Periodontal disease (inflammation of the gums) can be picked up and treated at an early stage. This is a painful condition, and if it becomes advanced can lead to the equine struggling to chew, especially hay, and they will be seen to quid (drop balls of fibre). Eventually this will result in loose teeth, which are very uncomfortable and have to be extracted.

If you have recently purchased an equine it is advised that you have their teeth checked as soon as possible. A dental examination is not included as part of the vetting process, so it is

your responsibility to arrange this after purchase. You'll need to identify any problems as soon as possible.

Preparing your equine for their dental visit will help minimise any stress they may feel:

- Don't give them a feed too soon before the visit.
- A clean and tidy stable is the ideal place to carry out the check.
- The vet or Equine Dental Technician will need water; preferably warm water in the winter.

For more information on dental check-ups and procedures visit:

<https://portal.bevahosting.org.uk/Horse-Owners/Dentistry>

<https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/horse-health-and-sickness/teeth/dental-checks>