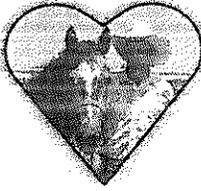


Hey Neighbor



## For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

### Regular checkups reduce toothaches in horses

Tooth problems in horses are common because their teeth never stop growing.

"Horses need their teeth checked at least annually and more often in older horses," said Dr. Eric Carlson, Westmoreland veterinarian.

Clinical signs of a tooth problem are slobbering feed when eating, excessive saliva, poor body condition, head-shaking, fighting the bit and acting up when riding.

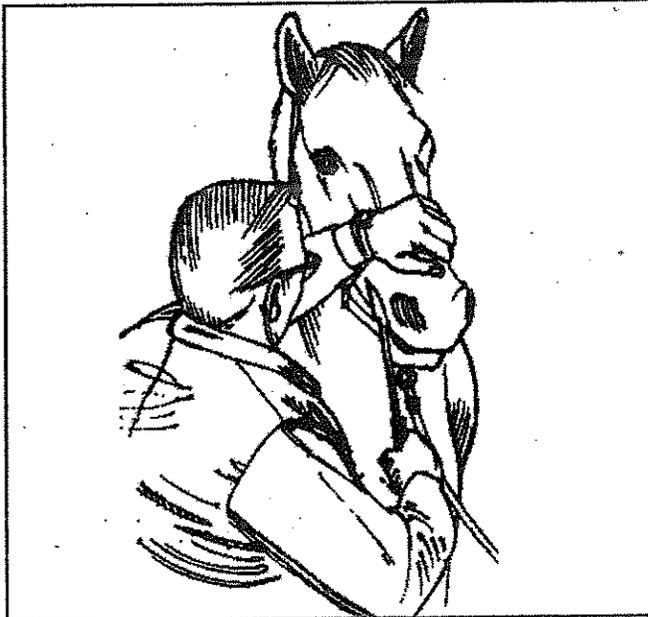
"When a horse shows these symptoms, it needs a veterinarian's examination of the teeth and oral cavity," Carlson recommended. Horses are typically sedated and a speculum inserted to totally open the mouth so a flashlight can be used to make a thorough inspection of the teeth.

"Horses have large teeth with roots located deep in the bone of the upper and lower jaws," described Dr. Ken Marcella, veterinarian at the Chattahoochee Equine, Canton, Ga.

the wolf teeth of males when they are being castrated as well as those in other young horses as a preventive measure. Extraction is a relatively simple procedure

when the horse is under sedation.

Caps are a common problem on young horses too, Carlson related. "They are the deciduous tooth on top



The process of rasping or filing a horse's teeth is known as floating. It removes sharp enamel points and can the even bite plane.

of a permanent tooth and cause pain until they come off or are removed," he said.

"Some horses have straighter teeth alignment than others, and their teeth will wear more slowly and evenly," Marcella said. "Other horses have uneven wear creating hooks, points and waves, which make chewing food difficult and can create sores."

Treatment for this situation is called floating and is relatively easy and usually painless. "Because the horse is a flighty animal, I usually sedate them and use a mouth rasp to level the teeth," Carlson said.

A few horses need their teeth floated twice a year, while others only need it annually. "There are some horses with almost perfectly conformed jaws that seldom require floating until they're older," Marcella added.

A warning was issued by Marcella to be aware of "overzealous dental treatment." He said, "With the advent of power floats, teeth are ground too short, leaving horses with sore mouths. This is sure a lot different than floating teeth with a hand rasp.

"It's become almost as much of a problem in some situations when too much teeth are taken off, versus no treatment," Marcella added. Specifically, this can become a predicament when a traveling equine dentist comes to a farm and

*Continued on page 7*

"Teeth are wider at the chewing surface than at the roof. As a horse ages, its teeth continue to grow and push farther out from the root. The unique shape, size and growth of the teeth can cause uneven growth and problems as the horse matures," Marcella continued.

Wolf teeth can create problems in young riding horses. "These are small teeth found on the upper jaw in front of the premolars," Carlson explained. "They usually come in at about six months of age and sometimes much later. Wolf teeth are found most often in males, but they'll also occur in females."

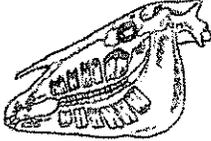
Problems most often arise when a horse goes into training, and the bit rubs on the wolf teeth causing pain and resistance from the horse. There is not always a dilemma.

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## TEETH ERUPTION TIMES

### Deciduous (Baby Teeth)

1st incisors (centrals)	Birth or 1st week
2nd incisors (intermediates)	4-6 weeks
3rd incisors (corners)	6-9 months
1st, 2nd & 3rd premolars (cheekteeth)	Birth or first 2 weeks for all premolars



### Permanent (Adult Teeth)

1st incisors (centrals)	2 1/2 years
2nd incisors (intermediates)	3 1/2 years
3rd incisors (corners)	4 1/2 years
Canines (bridle)	4-5 years
Wolf teeth (1st premolars)	5-6 months
2nd premolars (1st cheek teeth)	2 1/2 years
3rd premolars (2nd cheek teeth)	3 years
4th premolars (3rd cheek teeth)	4 years
1st molars (4th cheek teeth)	9-12 months
2nd molars (5th cheek teeth)	2 years
3rd molars (6th cheek teeth)	3 1/2 - 4 years

*Continued from page 6*

insists that all horses need major dental work, when generally this is not the case.

"These people make their living working on horse's teeth and the more they can treat the higher their income," Marcella commented. "That's when a good working relationship with your own veterinarian is needed. They'll likely explain which horses really need their teeth floated and the ones that don't or can wait longer."

Horses can get cavities, but this is generally not a concern, Carlson said. As with people, food can lead to gingivitis or inflammation of the gums and ultimately tooth disease. Abscesses, swelling and infection can derive from injuries as well. These problems all require treatment, and sometimes even removal of a tooth.

"Pulling a tooth is often a complex procedure," Carlson said. It can require complete anesthesia, but sometimes can be done with less intense procedures.

Teeth that are pulled or

those that are knocked out in an accident will not grow back. "The teeth above or below them often grow into the area and must be rasped down," Carlson pointed out.

Tartar, or calcium deposits, also can accumulate on horse teeth. "It must be removed to prevent further disease," Carlson stated.

Questions often arise from horse owners about young horses having missing teeth. "When young horses lose their baby teeth, there will often be a gap until the permanent teeth come in, and this is not a problem," Carlson advised. An accompanying chart indicates the approximate ages at which different teeth erupt in horses.

Overbites and parrot mouths are genetic deformities of the jawbone that affect teeth growth and can hinder eating. Usually horses with these defects will adjust to the situation somewhat, but will typically consume feed at a slower rate and with poorer conversion. "I would never breed horses with these problems, and it's better not to buy a horse with poor teeth," Carlson said.

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However, Carlson as a common practice removes the wolf teeth of males when they are being castrated as well as those in other young horses as a preventive measure. Extraction is a relatively simple procedure when the horse is under sedation.

Caps are a common problem on young horses too, Carlson related. "They are the deciduous tooth on top of a permanent tooth and cause pain until they come off or are removed," he confirmed.

"Some horses have straighter teeth alignment than others, and their teeth will wear more slowly and evenly," Marcella clarified. "Other horses have uneven wear creating hooks, points and waves, which make chewing food difficult and can create sores."

Treatment for this situation is called floating and is relatively easy and usually painless. "Because the horse is a flighty animal, I usually sedate them and use a mouth rasp to level the teeth," Carlson verified.

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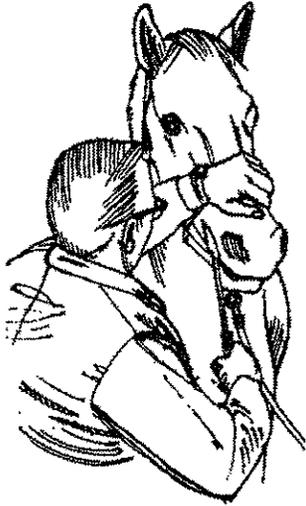
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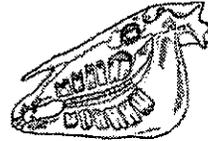


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