

Here at Thumb Veterinary Services our equine team is looking forward to spring weather! We want to share some tips to keep your horse's mouth in tip top shape.

### Recognizing your Horse's Dental Problems

Horses with dental problems may show signs, ranging from pain or irritation, to no noticeable signs at all. This is because some horses simply adapt to their discomfort. For this reason, periodic dental examinations are essential to your horse's health.

It is important to catch dental problems early. If a horse starts behaving abnormally, dental problems should be considered as a potential cause. Waiting too long may increase the difficulty of remedying certain conditions or may even make remedy impossible. Look for the following indicators of dental problems to know when to seek veterinary attention for your horse:

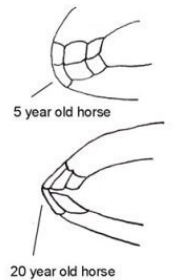


1. Loss of feed from mouth while eating, difficulty with chewing, or excessive salivation.
2. Loss of body condition.
3. Large or undigested feed particles (long stems or whole grain) in manure.
4. Head tilting or tossing, bit chewing, tongue lolling, fighting the bit, or resisting bridling.
5. Poor performance, such as lugging on the bridle, failing to turn or stop, even bucking.
6. Foul odor from mouth or nostrils, or traces of blood from the mouth.
7. Nasal discharge or swelling of the face, jaw, or mouth.

Oral exams should be an essential part of an annual physical examination by a veterinarian. Every dental exam provides the opportunity to perform routine preventative dental maintenance. Mature horses should get a thorough dental exam at least once a year, and horses 2 -5 years old should be examined twice yearly.

### Fun Facts for You to Chew On

- Young horses have 24 milk teeth, known as 'caps' - 12 incisors and 12 premolars.
- A foal's teeth will begin to erupt within a week of being born, and they should have a full set of caps by six months. They should have all been replaced by about the age of 5.
- Horses grind their food, which wears away their molars. For this reason, their teeth continually erupt from their gums over the course of their life. These type of teeth are known as 'hypsodont'.
- Horses' teeth erupt at about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch per year.
- Incisors also get worn away when tearing foliage and therefore continually erupt. However, stall-kept horses don't normally use their incisors in this way and therefore overgrown incisors can become a problem.



### Up Coming Events

- Spring Vaccine and Dental Special ( see attached flyer)



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