



2140 Maple Drive
Plover, WI 54467

Office: (715)342-1212 office@corrientevet.com
Fax: (715)342-0212 corrientevet.com

Equine Dentistry

Did you know that horses have anywhere from 36 to 40 teeth? Did you also know that equine teeth slowly erupt over time, creating sharp enamel points in areas which are not in continuous wear. For instance, the outer edges of the upper arcades (rows of teeth) and the inner edges of the lower arcades can become extremely sharp causing ulceration of the cheeks and tongue. These sharp enamel points must be 'floated' or filed down by a veterinarian every 6 months to a year, depending on the individual horse. This process requires the horse to be sedated to allow placement of a full mouth speculum. Prior to floating, the veterinarian examines each individual tooth and the surrounding gingiva for conditions that have the potential to prevent normal mastication (chewing) such as decay, periodontal disease, fractures, diastemas (spaces between teeth), feed packing and loose teeth. Other conditions such as brachygnathia ('parrot mouth') and prognathia ('monkey mouth') can lead to the development of 'ramps' and 'hooks' which also prevents normal mastication. An excessive or worn crown can also create problems and must be addressed by reducing the height of the longer teeth.

Equine dentistry has made amazing advances over the years. Veterinarians are trained to not only be able to recognize problems such as dental decay, periodontal disease, fractured teeth and tooth root abscesses but also have the appropriate tools to treat these conditions. Motorized dental equipment has allowed veterinarians to make corrections faster and with more precision than was accomplished with hand floats. The use of local anesthesia and nerve blocks has made tooth extraction a much less painful experience for the patient. Veterinarians are also trained to take and interpret radiographs which are necessary for diagnosing fractured teeth, abscesses and sinusitis from a tooth root infection (among other conditions).

Ignoring these problems in your horse can lead to decreased feed efficiency, weight loss, chronic pain and systemic infections. These conditions can be devastating and once they have reached this magnitude, can be difficult and costly to treat. Prevention is the key! Make sure your horse's teeth are checked each year and floated as needed by a veterinarian.