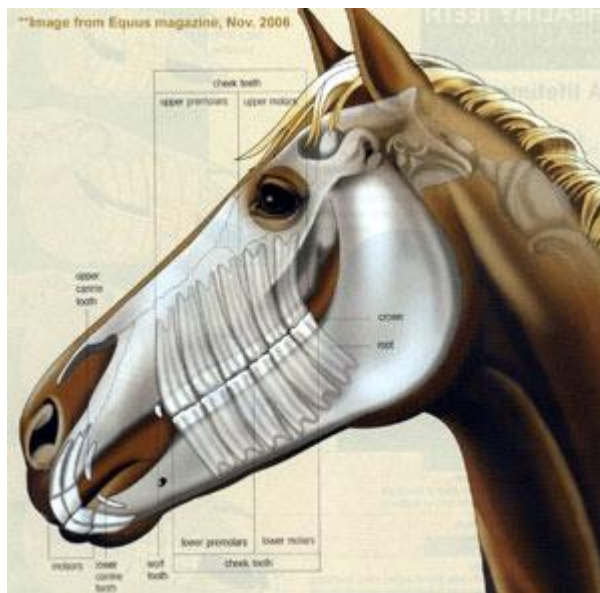


## Equine Dentistry



Research in equine dentistry, compared with other aspects of equine medicine, has been lagging until recently. Current research has led to a more scientific approach and the availability of power equipment plus postgraduate training for veterinarians has changed some of the recommendations regarding equine dental care.

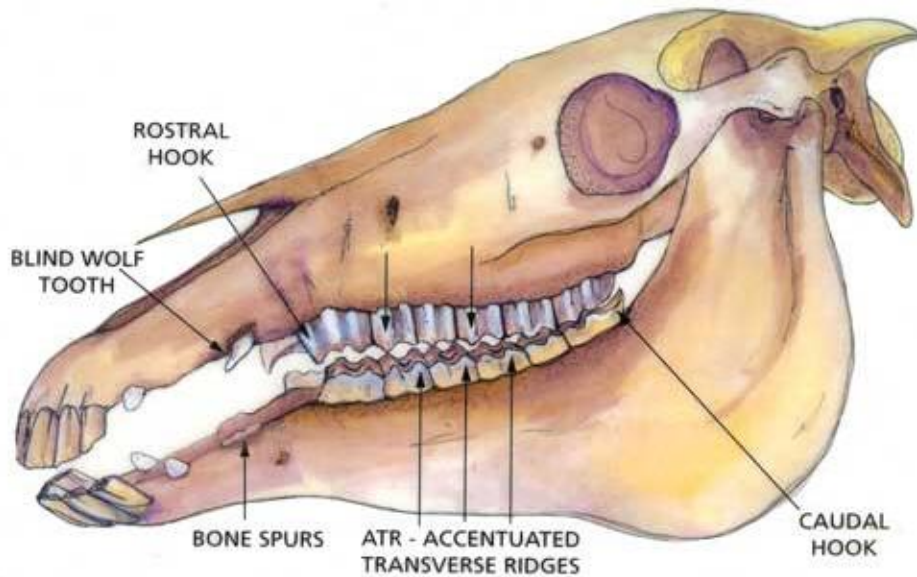


First and foremost, a thorough oral examination should be performed on most horses starting at 2 years of age. Since the molar teeth are positioned about 10-14 inches behind the incisor (front) teeth, a full mouth speculum, a clean mouth, a very bright light, and a method to gently move the tongue and cheeks away from the molars are essential equipment for the equine dentist. Most horses will require sedation in order to be cooperative enough for a thorough oral exam.

Routine dental equilibration (“floating”) should begin in the horse’s second year of life. At this time, examination can reveal the presence of the first upper premolars (“wolf teeth”) as well as proper eruption of the permanent molars. When the permanent molars erupt, the remaining part of the baby tooth (“caps”) can be retained and may need to be

removed between 2 ½ and 5 years of age. Retained caps and eruption of permanent teeth at different times (asynchronous eruption) can pave the way for bite abnormalities later in life.

Just as the young horse can develop malocclusions because of asynchronous eruption, the adult horse can develop malocclusions from asynchronous wear. This can occur if an opposing tooth is softer or unequal in size. A tall tooth, “hooks” (overgrowths of the first or last molars), “ramps” (excessive slope to the tooth) or “waves” (chewing surfaces of the molars are not straight and undulate in waves) can occur and require correction to allow full front-to-back and side-to-side motion of the jaw.



Images Courtesy of Thomas J. Johnson, DVM

Geriatric horses present a completely different set of dental issues. If the horse has not had regular dental care it may have periodontal disease, excessive spaces between the teeth that trap food materials (also known as a diastema), loose teeth, wave-mouth, or teeth that have worn out. The aim of dental care for geriatric horses is to prolong the useful life of the horse's teeth as long as possible and to make sure the animal is comfortable and healthy.

At the Thompson Veterinary Clinic we offer a full range of equine dental care. We utilize water cooled power dental equipment as well as a wide assortment of hand floats for hard to reach locations. We have been providing equine dental care for over 25 years and power tool work for the past 7 years. We have an excellent haul-in facility which is equipped with stocks that provide an additional measure of comfort for the horse and safety for both the horse handler and the equine dental care team. Equine dental care may be performed in-house or on location. We encourage having your horses' teeth assessed every 6-12 months to ensure preventive measures are taken to provide the proper oral care to maintain optimal health.