

EQUINE DENTISTRY Contd. From Page 1

edges of enamel that start to protrude on the buccal (cheek side) of the upper premolars and molars and on the lingual (tongue side) of the lower cheek teeth. The premolars and molars are the large grinding teeth that are situated behind the area taken up by the bit and extend backwards approximately 8 inches. Floating teeth has basically meant the removal of these points. Performance dentistry addresses not only the removal of these points, but also takes into account many



This motorized caudal hook grinder allows Dr. Judd to focus his work on hard to reach areas while protecting the surrounding teeth and soft tissue.

other factors of equine dentition including removing hooks, ramps and rims which are some of the abnormalities of molars that are often left poorly addressed in a routine float. Other aspects of performance dentistry include correcting waves and overgrown molars (high molars or steps), re-establishing molar table angles, creating uniform bit seats, incisor maintenance, reducing canines (not to be confused with wolf teeth) and removing wolf teeth and deciduous teeth (caps). We will go into each of these subjects in more detail next.

Hooks are defined as being an overgrowth of tooth that is more tall than deep. After point formation, hooks are probably the most commonly discovered abnormality. They usually form as sharp, fang-like projections on the upper first cheek teeth and the lower last cheek teeth. (Our web site will provide more detail on this subject soon.)

Ramps are defined as an overgrowth of tooth longer in depth than in height, and they are the next most commonly seen anomaly sec-

ond to hooks. They involve more tooth body, therefore, they are more difficult to remove.

Rims are formed on an individual tooth when the center of the occlusal (grinding) surface becomes worn down compared to the outer edge of the tooth.

Wave formation involves an overgrowth of tooth in more than one consecutive tooth. Since waves involve more than one tooth, they require a rather large amount of tooth reduction and can be quite involved. Viewed from the side a wave looks just like its namesake. An elevation in the molar surface corresponds with an indentation in the molar surface opposite it.

Overgrown molars can be caused from the lack of an opposing tooth or because of the super-eruption of the offending tooth which causes excessive wear on the opposing molar. These teeth can be handled by either cutting or grinding them back to normal height.

Bit seat creation involves placing shallow angles into the very front edge of the upper and lower first

cheek teeth. Creating a bit seat in the leading edge of the first cheek teeth gives the soft tissues of the mouth (tongue, inside edge of the corners of the lips and cheeks) a comfortable place to rest while a bit is in use.

Incisor maintenance refers to making sure the length of the incisors (front, grass shearing teeth) is in correct proportion to the length of the molars. If the incisors are too long they keep the molars out of

contact with each other during a chewing cycle. If the molars are too long in relation to the incisors, the incisors won't come together completely. We can judge molar and incisor proportion by observing the effect of lateral movement of the jaw. Keeping the incisor length proportionate to the molar length and adjusting the molar table angle to 10 to 15 degrees allows the horse to achieve maximum efficiency of feed breakup and, therefore, utilization. We look for stems no longer than 3/8 of an inch in the manure to assess grinding efficiency.

Canine reduction involves shortening and blunting the canine teeth when they are present. Many authorities in the profession of equine dentistry now recommend this procedure since it serves a number of purposes. Canine reduction contributes to making the horse

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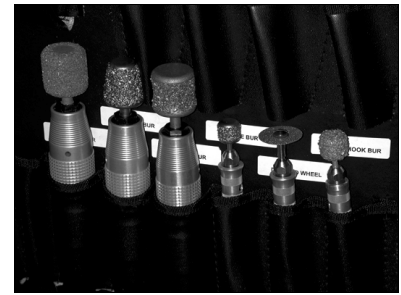
more comfortable with a bit in its mouth, reduces the occurrence of abrasion on the horse's tongue, reduces likelihood of injury to the hands of anyone examining or working in the horse's mouth, and can slow or prevent tartar formation in this common area for tartar buildup.

Wolf teeth are small permanent teeth that erupt usually within the first year or two of the horse's life. The crown (the part of the tooth visible above the gum) usually averages about the size of a pencil eraser. When present, this tooth sits just in front of the first upper cheek teeth and has a high probability of causing biting problems. With proper levels of sedation and anal-

gesia (pain relief) they can usually be removed quite easily.


Deciduous teeth are baby teeth that erupt and exist in the young horse's mouth from birth through 4 1/2 years old. They exist for the incisors and for the first three upper and lower cheek teeth (pre-molars). Deciduous teeth are often called "caps" and, like a loosening baby tooth in humans, can be quite uncomfortable for several weeks prior to falling out. When loosening caps are discovered during a dental exam they should be removed at that time.

The above discussion demonstrates the complexity of equine dentistry when it is approached with the goal



Various burs used for performance dentistry.

of balancing the equine mouth.

This spring we will be introducing a page on our website, (www.tomjuddvdm.com) devoted to equine dentistry. Photographs of actual cases, diagrams and articles will be displayed to help our clients better understand what's going on inside their horses' mouths. ~ Tom Judd, D.V.M. 

PRACTICE NEWS, Contd. From page 1

tice biographies are all available for you to review. We are currently setting up a list of web links we find interesting, as well as some new pages of interest which should be ready in the near future. We now answer non-urgent questions and set up appointments routinely via e-mail.

We have also made a big change in our billing policy. *Please remember that payment is expected when the service is provided.* Due to the growing number of outstanding balances we have had to put an end to our billing practice. We now ask that all outstanding balances be paid upon receipt of your invoice. Billing and interest charges will begin accruing within 15 days. This is our new policy for delinquent accounts; if no payment or communication is received within 60 days from the initial date of service, we will suspend services until the account is clear (this includes emergencies!). If an account becomes

90 days overdue from the initial date of service, we will turn the information over to the Maine Credit Bureau and services will be indefinitely terminated. We are now accepting Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express on the farm, and we hope this helps. I also want to stress the importance of communication if you *do* fall behind or have difficulty with an outstanding balance! We will work with you to clear a balance if the lines of communication are present and you make an effort to contact us.

The on-farm small animal/small ruminant preventative care that we performed this past spring and summer went very well. It is no wonder that our clients with wonderful horses also have great cats, dogs, pot-bellied pigs, sheep, goats, hedgehogs (you know who you are) and a variety of other pets.

I would also like to remind our clients with senior horses that if you

are feeding, or considering an extruded senior horse feed, be sure you are feeding by weight and not by volume. A common mistake is to switch seniors over to an extruded feed and then still feed by the "coffee can". The process that makes these products easier for older horses to chew and digest also makes the feed have fewer calories per volume. This means that your horse will have to eat more to maintain health. Of course you must monitor your horse's weight and condition carefully and adjust feed accordingly. Remember, it is very important to maintain the appropriate weight of your horse. Too much can be just as bad as too little!

We are always looking for feedback and ideas related to the practice. Please do not hesitate to contact us with a concern or with an improvement you would like to see addressed. We love the input! I look forward to another great year!

~ Vicki Coffin, L.V.T.



In an effort to provide you with a new source of information about how to care for your horses and other animals, we have updated our website. Our site contains information about the practice, our deworming schedule, current and archived newsletters with PDF links, and an Equine Health Network page with links to equine web sites. We will also be adding some new pages of interest in the near future. The initial changes will be the addition of a page dedicated to Equine Dentistry, which will provide detailed information and updates related to learning more about your horse's mouth. Another page of interest will be our Acupuncture Page. Dr. Judd will provide some more detailed information related to acupuncture in horses and other animals, and we will be including photographs of some long-term acupuncture patients as well. Looking even further ahead, we hope to be able to add some pages dedicated to small ruminant care, a photo gallery, interesting cases...the possibilities are endless!

Please remember that it is very convenient to contact us via email to schedule appointments or receive answers to non-urgent questions. You may use the link directly from our website to contact us. When contacting us for appointments, please try to include your scheduling limitations, such as specific days that are better or worse, and times that are more convenient than others (early morning versus mid-afternoon, etc.). Also, keep in mind that we do not schedule weekend or evening appointments, since Dr. Judd is on call 24 hours a day.

Keep checking our website to monitor the changes and let us know what you think. If you have comments or suggestions, do not hesitate to share them with us!




Spring is almost upon us. Please remember that spring is our busiest time of year and our schedule can be booked ***four to six weeks ahead beginning very soon.*** If you are considering purchasing a new horse, or have other non-emergency issues, please plan ahead and call early to set up appointments.

VACCINE UPDATES:

Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis (E.P.M.) Vaccine will be available in limited quantities this spring under conditional licensing. The initial safety trial of this vaccine was performed on 900 horses with little to no side effects reported at this time. Veterinarians in this area have been asked to participate in the next leg of the study which will provide further information on reactivity and efficacy. The vaccine will cost approximately \$40.00 per dose and participating horses will need an initial dose, followed by a booster dose in 2 to 4 weeks.

EPM is a debilitating and sometimes fatal neurologic disease of horses that is linked to infection by a protozoal parasite. Opossums and birds are the normal hosts for this parasite, but horses may become infected by ingesting the organism in food contaminated by opossum fecal material. Current diagnostic procedures and treatment regimes are difficult, often unreliable and can have limited effectiveness. Please let us know if you are considering this vaccine since we must purchase it as a special order.

We are now offering **Intranasal Strangles Vaccine** as well as our Intramuscular Strangles Vaccine. Please call us for details.



**Tom Judd,
D.V.M.**

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