



Follow a Dental Session

THE FINEST DENTAL CARE FOR YOUR HORSE.

Note: In order to explain certain terms and conditions in more detail, we have provided links in this session to appropriate sections of [Dr. Judd's Equine Dentistry article](#) that appears on this website.

Our patient for the day was Kiwi, a 30+ year old retired NYC police horse who was also used in 3 phase eventing and dressage. His owner, Sandi, says he still enjoys trail rides, beach rides and swimming. This is an example of **preventive health care** and responsible, caring ownership at its best!

Dr. Judd begins a typical dental exam by discussing the horse's current activity and health, its medical history and any previous issues or concerns with the owner.

He wears a head lamp to pinpoint light on specific areas of the mouth while keeping his hands free.



After rinsing and cleaning out Kiwi's mouth (above), Dr. Judd places his head in this custom dental stand (left) to help stabilize him during the exam. The main column of the stand is fitted with sturdy springs that allow the horse to shift weight slightly while preventing him from tipping over the stand.

The free-standing nature of this stand allows Dr. Judd the flexibility to conduct exams inside or outside, depending on the temperament of each horse and the layout of each barn.



The speculum (right) holds Carmen's mouth open so that Dr. Judd can work safely and efficiently, even in the back section of the mouth. The cushioned head rest provides a comfortable surface on which the horse can rest his/her head.



(Thanks to Jan for allowing us to take photographs in her barn, and to Aleece for allowing us to use these three pictures of Carmen on our site.)

Dr. Judd performs a visual exam and palpation in order to assess the condition of the horse's mouth and teeth. He takes this opportunity to briefly assess other aspects of the horse's general health by checking facial symmetry and probing for irregularities, checking the condition of the horse's skin and mouth tissue, checking hydration, capillary refill time and general gum color and consistency.



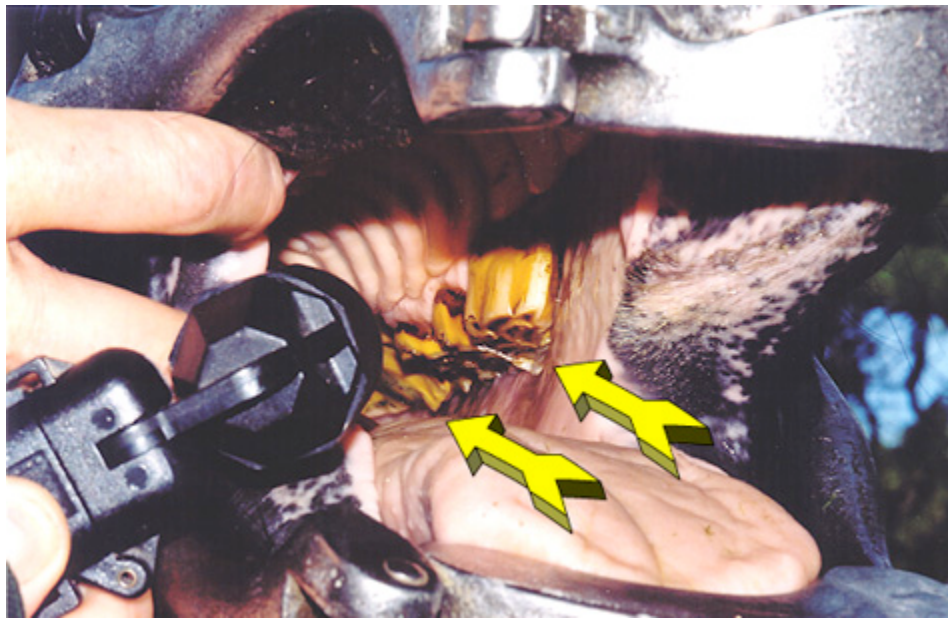
While the medical information is discussed, Vicki (a licensed veterinary technician under the direction of Dr. Judd) administers sedative in a dose that keeps Kiwi quiet during the exam, but allows him to wake by the time the exam is over. Dosage depends on the size and condition of the horse and its medical history.



Dr. Judd takes the time to review the condition of Kiwi's mouth with the owner. He will point out areas that need work, explain what he sees and feels and describe his plan for the session.



On this day, Dr. Judd conducted a dental exam that included some minor corrective work. His goal was to remove sharp points (top, yellow arrows) off the pre-molars, thus alleviating pressure on the lower jaw and cheeks, and making it more comfortable for Kiwi to chew. Because Kiwi is on a routine dental care plan, Dr. Judd can focus on a few key issues and conduct a thorough, but expedient exam.



Dr. Judd checks the incisor contact by gently rubbing the teeth together to assess the "slide", and the surface angle, which should follow the molar line.



During the exam he will check his progress regularly using this method.



Repeated grinding and rubbing motions during chewing can cause angle and surface irregularities that diminish the horse's ability to chew and digest efficiently.

Horses of all ages and uses experience some normal wear to their teeth. Managing the process with routine dental care by licensed veterinary professionals can prevent these normal changes from becoming problems that affect the horse's health.

In order to create the correct relationship between the molars and incisors, Dr. Judd must make slight adjustments to the incisor line. Adjusting the angles will allow the horse to chew in a more natural, uninhibited circular motion.

This process is critical and demands an experienced hand. Dr. Judd is careful not to take off too much surface, as he does not want to cause stress points or create spaces in which food can accumulate.



One of the final steps in the exam is to check for tartar. The light brown coating seen on the teeth in this photo (right) is tartar buildup. Dr. Judd removes the tartar in order to improve the general condition of the mouth, reduce the chances of medical complications that might arise if too much tartar builds up and allows bacteria into the bloodstream.



Dr. Judd might need to make a few minor adjustments at the end of the exam.

It is ideal to have an experienced assistant present during the exam, as it can be physically challenging to keep the horse stable, handle all the equipment and monitor the horse's condition while working on the teeth.



(Is Vicki actually smiling under that mask?
Of course she is!)

After the exam, Dr. Judd instructs Sandi to keep watch on Kiwi during the next week or so. After the dental procedure, Kiwi may need a little time to adjust to some of the changes in his mouth.

Depending on the extent of the work required, horses may need to learn new jaw movements. Dr. Judd recommends that owners notice any changes in eating habits or behavior during feeding time during the week following dental work.

While Dr. Judd answers questions and discusses follow up care with the owner, his assistant gets the fun job (Thanks, Sarah)! Proper cleaning of equipment and instruments is a critical step in preventing the spread of illnesses and diseases from one barn to the next and is critical for optimum equipment efficiency.

