



this month's issue



1. ASK EQUUS
2. 12 Signs of Good Health
3. Schooling success With Karen Keller
4. Contact Us

ASK EQUUS

Question: "My horse has very few teeth. How will this affect his management and diet?"

Answer:

As our horses live longer and longer, problems arising from poor, or few, teeth are becoming far more common and the loss of one or more teeth can severely affect their ability to forage and chew.

Horses, like humans, only have one set of permanent teeth for their lifetime and therefore routine dental care is of the utmost importance to ensure this one set stays complete. Regular dental check-ups are recommended at least every 6 months for horses with poor teeth.

Horses more often than not lose their teeth to disease, but cracked or infected teeth resulting from injury are common and often result in the affected tooth being removed to avoid secondary issues. Horses have hypsodont (continuously erupting from the gum) teeth, and so the chewing process over time will constantly wear down each tooth, meaning the older the horse gets the less tooth there is left, which is why older horses may have more issues than their younger counterparts.

Signs that teeth may be missing or there is a dental problem:

- Your horse is quidding forage, or dropping feed.
- Your horse has lost weight - although this does not always mean that teeth are the issue. Make sure you schedule a full veterinary checkup, including bloodwork, to rule out any other underlying medical problems.
- Frequent choking

Feeding Suggestions

It is important to note here that no matter how many teeth your horse is missing, his ability to chew and thus digest food will be compromised. For any horse, fibre is the most important part of any diet, but missing teeth may mean that traditional hay and grazing is not an option.

For example, if your horse is missing incisors, he might have difficulty grazing short grass as it will be difficult for him to grip and tear off the short stems. Grazing is still vital, however, but remember that you will not be able to rely on pasture as the major source of nutrients for such horses.

Testimonials

Dear Equus

I'm a very happy owner! My two beautiful horses RULE THE WAVE and TREASURED EMBLEM are fed on **Equus** and they look wonderful. I thank you for a great feed and for the fabulous service you provide.

Equus certainly has a passion for horses.

Sue Heasley



Legends Cape Town

Dear Equus

We thought we would send you our before and after.

After only one month on a combination of **Equus Train 'n Leisure** and **Equus Nice 'n Easy** this horse has simply transformed. He has put on weight and muscle tone and his coat has drastically improved, all while keeping his lovely attitude.

We thank you for a great feed

Legends, Cape Town



Horses without molars have difficulty grinding their feed, so in these cases it is best to avoid ingredients with hard outer coats such as whole maize, sunflower seeds or ingredients that need to be reduced in size before swallowing (such as long stem grass or hay). This is a problem as large clumps of hay or grass (boluses) could become stuck in the oesophagus, causing choke. Where a horse is missing molars, then you will need to take some of the work out of chewing for him.

Where to start?

1. As far as roughage is concerned, horses with dental issues should still have free-choice access to either grazing or hay, allowing for a more natural range of behaviours. This can also help to reduce the chances of digestive upsets, such as gastric ulcers and colic. Choke-prone horses are the only exception to the rule and should not be allowed access to long-stemmed hay or pasture. Alternative fibre sources such as hay cubes, chaffs and beet pulp can help to provide quality fibre to the diet of horses no longer able to chew long-stemmed roughage and to supplement those who have difficulty grazing. **Equus Nice 'n Easy** and **Equus Lucerne Cubes** are ideal roughage alternatives.
2. If your horse is not able to maintain his workload and/or weight from grazing and fibre sources alone, then an additional concentrate feed will be needed. To aid your horse to obtain the most nutrients, choose a feed that has been processed, that is, one that has been pelleted or extruded. During the pelleting process, feedstuffs are ground up, mixed together, pressed through a die, and cut to the desired length. This helps by breaking down the ingredients for the horse (something chewing would normally do) while giving a better distribution of ingredients, and prevents the horses from having to pick through their feed. Extruded ingredients can improve horses' starch and protein digestion according to some research. Either **Equus Train 'n Leisure** or **Equus Nice 'n Easy** would be suitable in these cases.
3. Provide small meals often. Dividing feed, especially concentrate feed, into smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day is helpful as pellets are often eaten much faster and spreading the feeding of them them out provides the horse with a more natural way of eating, that is, more or less continuously throughout the day. In the older horse, it also allows the gut adequate opportunity to utilise and digest each meal fully. Another feeding tip is to soak pellets and hay cubes before feeding. Chewing results in saliva production, and saliva moistens the feed so it is easier to swallow, so, if a horse with few teeth tends to rush his feed without much chewing, then moistening the feed can help prevent choke. Not much water is needed and the time is minimal if warm water is used.

Although feeding the toothless horse can be a challenge, it is possible to provide your horse with the required nutrition.

12 Signs of Good Health

Keep Your Horse in tip top shape with these tips on good health and our free health check chart. Do note that each horse is different and therefore they may differ from the indicated norms below. It is thus always best to get to know your horse and his own health ranges.

1. **Rectal Temperature**- This is the best indicator of equine core temperature. The norm is around 37.2-38.6oc at rest. This will increase in horses that are sick but do keep in mind that environmental temperature, rugs and exercise will all cause changes in temperature.
2. **Breathing rate**- A Normal breathing rate is around 8-10 breaths per minute. Breathing rates will increase when the horse's respiratory system is not working properly or when the horse is in pain. Excitement and exercise will also increase this rate so it is always best to judge at rest.
3. **Heart Rate**- This is used to check the circulatory system and a normal healthy horse should have a resting heart rate of 28-44 beats per minute. You can measure heart rate in the girth area on the left side by listening with a stethoscope or by placing a finger on the lingual artery under the jaw. Count the number of beats in 15 seconds and multiply by four to calculate beats per minute. Note that young and smaller horses tend to have higher/ faster heart rates.
4. **Gut sounds**- Listening for these sounds help to assess intestinal function. Sounds will reduce during disturbances such as colic. Normal sounds should be a mix of gurgling, growling, and tinkling gas sounds. Horses exhibit increased gut sounds while eating and reduced sounds when stressed or fasting.
5. **Gum colour (Mucous membranes)**- Indicate healthy circulation and blood in your horse. The gums should be pink or pale pink and moist. Factors affecting this assessment include light, food in the mouth, and gum pigmentation.
6. **Capillary refill time**- is the time it takes for gums to return to pink after being pressed with a fingertip which in healthy horses should be within one second, indicating a good blood flow returning to the capillaries. Longer periods can indicate dehydration, shock, or blood loss.
7. **Digital Pulse** - can indicate inflammation in the feet. Feel for a pulse in the arteries located at the back of the fetlock; you should not be able to feel a bounding or throbbing pulse in a normal resting horse. Exercise makes this pulse more detectable, whereas excess hair and tissue make it more difficult to detect.
8. **Hoof wall temperature** - also indicates hoof inflammation. Use your hands to feel the temperature of the hoof wall, which should be cool, not hot. A horse's hooves can vary in temperature, however, and exercise and sunlight cause natural warming.
9. **Daily roughage Intake**- In all horses this should never fall below 1.5% of body weight per day. Roughage is a vital health component as it helps to maintain a happy gut as well as providing vital nutrients. If hay is in short supply look for roughage alternatives such as fibre cubes, chaffs, or even beet style products.
10. **Daily water intake**- should be approximately 7-8 litres per 100kg of body weight, so around 35-40 litres for the average 500kg horse. Normal body functions require a good water intake, and this amount will increase if environmental temperature rises and/or the horse is working.

11. **Daily urine volume**- should be around 8-9 litres in the average 500kg horse. Normal urine amount along with normal water intake usually means the horse is hydrated and the kidneys are functioning. Water intake affects urine output, as can exercise.
12. **Skin Pinch test**- indicates hydration. If you pinch a fold of skin on the point of shoulder, it should snap back within one second. The longer the skin takes to snap back, the less hydrated the horse. Foals tend to have slower skin pinch returns, however, and there are differences among breeds and individuals.

Details adapted from the detailed veterinary download available on TheHorse.com

Karen Keller

Schooling Success



Karen is a Protea Dressage rider and National Champion, who is highly regarded in her field. When Karen is not schooling her own horses, she spends a lot of time teaching up and coming riders at Kellandstables, as well as at their home yards.

In this new series, Karen will be sharing her schooling “top tips” to help you and your horse in your everyday riding.

How to get the most value out of your riding lessons and clinics

1. Get to your lesson early: Even if your coach is late it is good for you to be on your horse before lesson starts so you can be mentally calm and in tune with your horse. It gives you time to quieten your own mind and assess your horse's mood and degree of freshness.
2. Attend lessons consistently. Cramming lessons 2 weeks before a show is like cramming for exams and also may result in injury or mental strain to your horse.
3. Ask lots of questions. It will help you learn and help your coach understand where you are at.
4. Do your homework and ask for homework.
5. Do not present an unfit horse.
6. Give your coach feedback at the beginning of each lesson.
7. Ask your coach to spend some time with you for setting realistic goals and make sure you are both on the same page and that they understand what you want to achieve.
8. Cool your horse off properly after the lesson (especially when you are riding on a clinic ,you do not want your horse to be stiff the next day
9. Keep your coach informed of any medical or soundness issues your horse may have, this goes for yourself as well.

10. In a clinic situation watch the other lessons. You can learn a lot from watching and it might help you understand better the instructions that the coach is giving you.
11. Take some time after the lesson to take notes and reflect on the lesson.
12. Get someone to video the lesson.
13. Do not forget to pay your coach- as much as they love teaching you they also have to pay their bills.

Happy riding

Contact Us

Office: 087 820 4580
Feeding Advice: 073 423 5491 / 083 998 6824
Email: info.equus@driehoek.co.za
tech.equus@driehoek.co.za

For an absolutely free consultation with no further obligation contact our professional consultants to schedule a visit to your yard.

Hannah - 073 423 5491
Helen - 083 998 6824
tech.equus@driehoek.co.za
helen@driehoek.co.za

