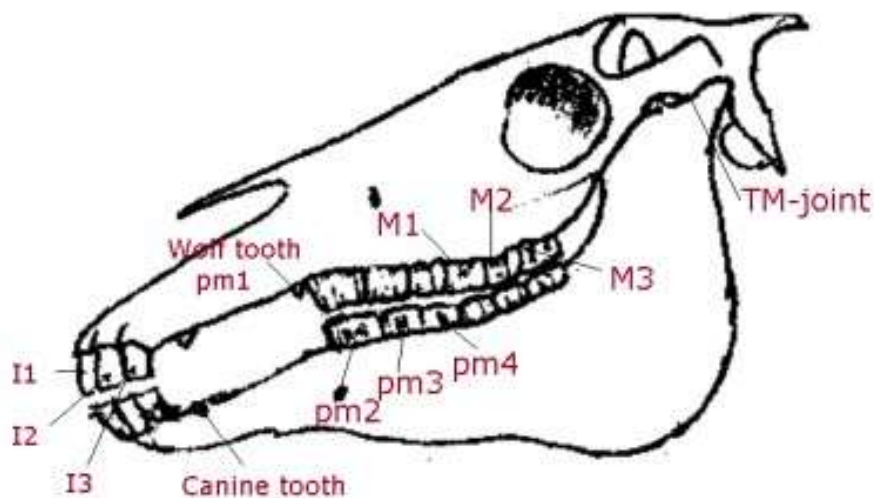


## Equine Dentistry

The dental care of your horse is an important part of their all round healthcare and as such we provide a dentistry service from vets who have undertaken further specialist training from the British Equine Veterinary Association. All equine vets at Avondale are trained in advanced dentistry.



Ideally, the vet should check your horse's teeth at least once a year this is because horse's teeth continually grow. Depending on the individual horse, the dental care required can vary from an annual manual rasp to specialised motorised work being required on a 4-6 monthly basis. Some common problems we see include overgrowths of individual teeth, sometimes as a result of the opposing tooth which should wear it down being missing, ulceration of cheeks from sharp points on the teeth, and diastemata, where gaps between the teeth allow food to pack and rot, leading to gum inflammation.

Things to watch out for which may suggest your horse has a problem with their teeth include:

- Dropping half chewed food (quidding)
- Head shaking or abnormal head carriage when ridden

- Eating more slowly than usual
- Bad breath
- Drooling
- Weight loss
- One-sided nasal discharge
- Swelling on the face or lower jaw
- Sticking tongue out of the mouth

Horses naturally have a lower jaw which is slightly narrower than the upper jaw and for this reason, even normal wearing down can lead to sharp enamel points forming on the outside (buccal) surface of the upper teeth and the inside (lingual) surface of the lower teeth.

### **What to expect at a dental examination**

All horses having their teeth examined will have the gag put on. This is not painful but allows us to open the horses mouth and see and feel to the furthest back teeth without the horse being able to bite accidentally. We will feel for any abnormalities like sharp points or overgrown teeth and where possible examine the mouth visually using a dental mirror. We will usually ask you if you have noticed anything different in the way your horse has been eating or how they have been with the bit.

In many circumstances horses will allow their mouths to be examined and rasped without sedation but for complex procedures and motorised dental work, sedation is necessary for the welfare of the horse and the safety of the vet and of course yourself! Equally, some horses will not allow the gag to be put on or are unhappy with their teeth being rasped, and if this is the case, sedation will be required so that we can perform a thorough examination and treatment as necessary.

Routine dental (manual rasping)	£31.20 inc vat
Routine dental with sedation (Horse)	£52.50 inc vat
Routine dental with sedation (Pony)	£44.00 inc vat

In certain situations, following examination of your horse's mouth, we may decide that more complex work is required and we can make a further appointment for your horse to attend the surgery or for the work to be performed at your yard. Clearly, for dental procedures other than routine rasping, estimates of price have to be made on a individual basis.

Please note it is our practice policy that we will not sedate horses or ponies for equine technicians 'dentists'.

## **Diastemata**

A condition which seems to be becoming more frequent is diastemas (diastemata). This is where food is trapped and becomes impacted between teeth, most commonly cheek teeth. Horses vigorously masticate fibrous food for over 18 hours per day, and even the smallest space between two cheek teeth will allow some food fibres aligned in the direction of the abnormal space to be forced into it and cannot be removed naturally by the horse. The food eventually rots causing progressive stretching, inflammation and destruction of the periodontal ligament, which holds the tooth in place and secondary infection can exacerbate this very painful periodontal disease. In the UK, diastemata of the cheek teeth is the major cause of quidding in horses, particularly in cases where no significant dental overgrowths are present. Diastemata may cause halitosis, quidding, food in the cheek and in advanced cases weight loss. Horses with diastemata have more difficulty chewing long fibres such as hay or haylage compared to short fibres and so are often asymptomatic on short grass, which has softer and finer fibres. Treatment of this condition involves cleaning out and widening of the interdental space using a diamond encrusted burr. When performed by a trained operator, this procedure is of enormous value to most cases. With many horses that have had severe oral pain and quidding for years becoming asymptomatic within a week or so of treatment and some younger horses becoming permanently cured.