

# Jenavive Dore

EQUINE DENTAL SERVICES

## The 5 SIGNS your horse needs a visit from the Equine Dentist

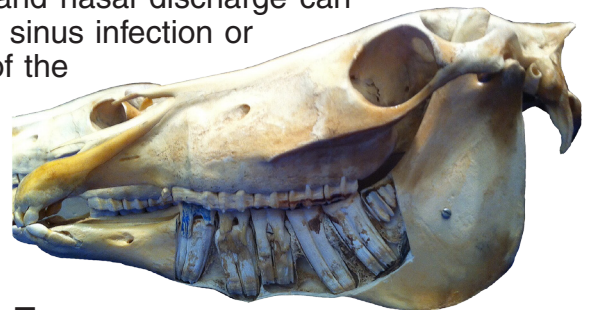
### 1. DIRTY WATER BUCKET

Have you noticed lately that the water bucket is a slimy mess with grain sitting on the bottom of the bucket or hay 'dunked' in the water? Horses will often do this if they have pain or discomfort in the mouth. Dunking the hay in water makes it softer and easier to chew. Filling the mouth with water pushes the cheeks off the sharp dental points trying to relieve the discomfort in chewing. Sharp dental points can cause ulcerations and lacerations in the cheeks and on the tongue.

### 2. SMELLY BREATH OR SLIMY SALIVA

Young horses start losing deciduous (caps) teeth at the age 2 ½ years until the age of 5. In this time frame the young horse will lose twenty four teeth (twelve incisors and twelve molars). It is common for the 'caps' to have food matter impacted between the 'cap' and the newly erupted adult teeth causing a smell. Similar to humans when they are teething, horses produce slimy saliva when the adult teeth are erupting. Sharp edges on loose caps can cause nasty ulcers in the cheeks. Older horses that have smelly breath and nasal discharge can indicate that the horse may have a tooth root abscess, sinus infection or a periapical (tissues surrounding the apex of the root of the tooth) infection.

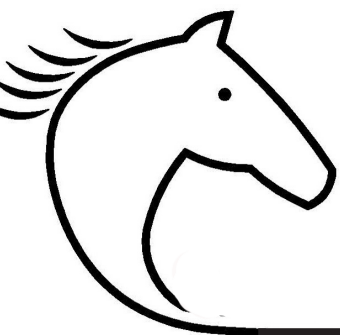
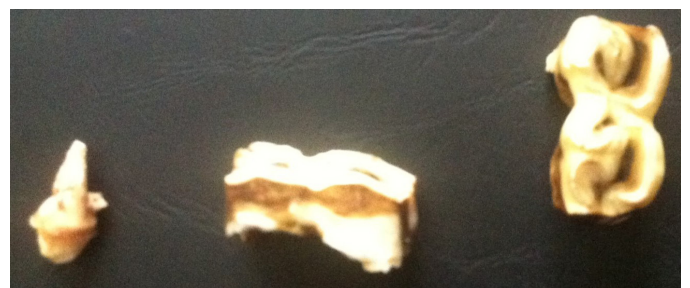
*Skull of an 18 month old horse demonstrates the depth of the tooth roots and the caps sitting on top of the first three lower molars.*



### 3. HEAD TOSSING/DISCOMFORT IN THE BRIDLE

Does any pressure put on the reins results in the horse flicking the nose, shaking the head or tilting the head on the side? Do you have difficulty turning in either direction or stopping? Sharp dental points and wolf teeth can cause a horse considerable discomfort with a bit in their mouth. The horse's mouth is not designed to wear a bit. When the mouth is closed, all free spaces in the oral cavity are filled with mucosa (gum) and tongue. When a bit is placed in the mouth the mucosa (gum) and tongue can be pinched or pushed against sharp dental points especially when pressure is put on the reins to either turn or stop. Wolf teeth sit in front of the first molars, upper and lower. Not all horses are born with them some horses are born with none, one, two, three, four! This tooth has no function in the modern day horse and can cause the horse a lot of discomfort if the 'bit' comes into contact with it. Wolf teeth are best removed once the first molar deciduous teeth have been lost or removed. This is generally around 2 ½ years of age.

*A wolf tooth and two lower deciduous caps after removal.*





**EQUINE DENTAL**  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.



## 4. WEIGHT LOSS

Are you at a loss as to why your horse is not thriving despite providing an excellent diet? Horses chew in a circular motion, called 'lateral excursion'. Sharp dental points on the outside edge of the upper cheek teeth and the inside edge of the lower cheek teeth reduce the efficiency of the lateral excursion. The incisors grab the food matter and the tongue pushes the food matter in a spiralling, grinding action across the cheek teeth towards the back of the throat. When it reaches the back of the throat the food matter is so finely broken down that it looks like it has been through a food processor. Sharp dental points reduce this grinding action and the food matter cannot be chewed effectively. The horse cannot absorb the required nutrients from the food to maintain a good body condition and perform at their peak.

## 5. DROPPING GRAIN OR WADS OF PARTIALLY EATEN HAY

Is there more feed scattered on the ground around the feed than in the actual feed bin? Does your horse try to shovel his whole mouth into the feed stuffing as much as he can get into his mouth? Around the hay net, are you finding half chewed wads of hay that look like they have been partially chewed or sucked and spat out? Horses that demonstrate these above eating behaviours can have discomfort in the mouth; this can be caused by loose caps, sharp dental points, and dental malocclusions (wave mouth, shear mouth).

*Jenavive Dore is an accredited and insured member of the Equine Dental Association of Australia and the information provided is a guide only.*

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