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*At Tradition of Leadership and Excellence in Equine Medicine*

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## **Equine Dentistry Adam S. Cayot, DVM**

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There are many factors that can contribute to a horse's poor athletic performance as well as poor body condition. Not least of which is poor dental health.

Dental health is very important to your horse's ability to digest food as well as perform with a bit in his mouth. Sharp edges on the teeth can cause cheek pinching when pressure is applied to the bit. These edges can also cause ulcerations to develop on the cheeks which can be very uncomfortable for the horse. Hooks may develop on some of the molars which inhibit the normal mechanical activity of chewing. Wolf teeth erupt on the bars of the mouth where the bit rests and should always be removed. Periodontal disease and overall gum health are important to monitor. These diseases can lead to lost teeth and tooth root abscesses. All of these problems tend to become more pronounced in older horses. So, the older your horse the more important good dental health becomes.

As equine dentistry evolves, performance dentistry is becoming the focus of equine dental evaluation. Performance dentistry is not only floating. It encompasses the shaping of cheek teeth to prevent soft tissue pain. Evaluation of function, symmetry, and balance of the teeth are also involved. Then where indicated treatment is performed. Function is the ability of the horse to adequately grind food and perform as expected without discomfort from dental problems. Symmetry is when one side of the mouth mirrors the other side. Balance is almost synonymous with function. A horse's mouth may be symmetrical but out of balance and vice versa. Any of these inconsistencies can impede the horse's ability to grind food and deal with the bit. A complete oral exam should evaluate all of these factors in your horse's mouth.

The state-of-the-art equipment used in modern dentistry is the Powerfloat. The Powerfloat is safer, faster, and allows the practitioner to do a more complete job. It is safer because it allows the practitioner to be more precise and thus soft tissue damage is

much less likely to occur. For those who may have heard stories or seen a dremel tool used, the Powerfloat **is not** a dremel tool. It is 100 times safer and easier to use than the dremel tools used to be.

The scope of modern equine dentistry is quite large. Young horses who are starting their breaking period can have bit seats placed which has been seen to make the horse much more accepting of the bit. Other performance problems, such as weight and conformation issues, can many times be traced to problems in the mouth which are correctable.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to address and evaluate the oral health of your horse or horses!

