

## Incisor Disease: Possible causes and treatment options

Incisor problems in horses are uncommon, but when they do occur they can be quite alarming as these teeth are obviously very visible! The main problem that we encounter is loose or missing teeth in the older horse, but incisor problems can occur in younger animals!



### Possible causes include:

#### Trauma

Incisor teeth are easily injured due to their relatively unprotected position within the mouth. Kicks, knocks or being caught on a fixed object can all cause incisors to fracture or displace, and may also fracture the surrounding jaw.

Fractured jaws and displaced teeth can often be repaired understanding sedation; however fractured teeth may require specialised treatment to prevent future infection of the root, or extraction.

#### Poor dental conformation

Normal horses have 6 upper and 6 lower incisors, which should meet when the mouth is closed. In some horses, the adult incisors do not erupt into their normal position. In these cases, deciduous (baby) teeth may be retained, causing further displacement of the adult teeth. In other cases, incisors may be greater or fewer in number than normal, or may develop in a

'slant' or 'smile' formation, which may be due to an underlying conformation problem such as a wry (twisted) nose. Retained deciduous teeth should be removed, and any displaced or overgrown adult teeth ground down with motorised tools to prevent obstruction of the chewing cycle.

#### Overgrown teeth

Overgrown incisors usually develop when they do not correctly oppose. One or more teeth may be affected - for example, in a case of 'parrot mouth', where the upper incisors protrude over the lower incisors, or 'sow mouth' where the lower incisors protrude, the entire arcade may be overgrown; in other cases, where there is a missing tooth/teeth, just the opposing teeth may overgrow. These overgrown teeth may affect the horses' ability to chew properly, and, if left untreated, may eventually become loose.

Overgrown teeth should be reduced with power tools to allow normal chewing to occur.



## EOTRH

Equine Odontoclastic Tooth Resorption and Hypercementosis (EOTRH) is a complex disease affecting the incisor and canine teeth in older horses. It results in resorption of the roots of the affected teeth, and cementum to deposit in these areas. It is currently unknown what the cause is, and therefore prevention is impossible at this time.

It is characterised by gingivitis (gum inflammation) in the initial stages, which progresses to gum recession and periodontal disease, which eventually causes loosening of the teeth and tooth loss. Teeth often have increased deposits of calculus on their surface, which may be the first sign noted.

Research is still ongoing as to the cause of this disease, and unfortunately there are no treatments available to stop its progression. Therefore we recommend that suspected cases are confirmed by means of radiography, and loose incisors are removed if they are causing pain and preventing effective eating. In some cases of early disease it may be possible to try and make the horse more comfortable by grinding down the affected teeth using motorised equipment in order to prevent the horse from biting on them - however, studies have shown that this is unlikely to prevent the disease progressing and the tooth being lost.



MKTG/Equine/Collateral/EquineInformation/Incisor Disease



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