



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Understanding more from your horse's Dental Chart

At each dental visit, we provide a detailed dental chart for your horse showing normal changes, any problems and corrections. These help us monitor your horse's mouth over time, enabling us to identify and treat problems as soon as possible. We understand that some of the terminology can feel technical, so we've created this guide to help explain what it all means, and why it's important for your horse's health and comfort.

Common Terms You May See on Your Horse's Dental Chart

SEPs (Sharp Enamel Points)

Horses chew in a wide, circular motion. Because their upper jaw is slightly wider than their lower jaw and enamel is the hardest part of the tooth (so wears away slower than the other constituent parts) sharp enamel edges develop naturally over time. These are most commonly found on the outside of the upper cheek teeth and the inside of the lower cheek teeth. If left untreated, SEPs can rub against the cheeks or tongue, causing ulcers, discomfort, resistance when ridden, and difficulty chewing. During routine dentistry, we carefully reduce these sharp points to restore comfort and improve chewing efficiency. SEPs are one of the most common findings in routine dental exams and are a normal consequence of how horses' teeth erupt and wear.

Diastema (plural: Diastemata)

A diastema is an abnormal gap between two teeth. This can happen as a result of a problem or because, as horses age, their teeth become narrower. Food can become trapped in this space. Over time, trapped food can lead to gum inflammation (gingivitis), infection, pain, and even tooth root problems. You might notice quidding (dropping partially chewed food), bad breath, weight loss, or resistance in work. Diastemata require assessment; removing food, examining the gums and determining a treatment plan. This can range for correction of the cause,

Equine Dental Examination Chart

Horse Name: _____
Surname: _____
History: _____

Date: _____
Clinician: _____
Body Condition Score: ____/5
Weight: ____ kg (Scales/Tape)
Next Examination in: _____ months
Sedation: _____

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Buccal

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#1

#2

#3

#4

Abnormalities and Findings

Incisors

Canines/Wolf Teeth

Cheek Teeth

SEPs = Sharp Enamel Points

Treatment And Plan

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removal of sharp enamel corners which contribute the trapped of food, monitoring and sometimes specific treatment to prevent progression.

Other Terms You Might See

Hooks - overgrowths at the front or back of cheek teeth caused by uneven wear. These can interfere with normal jaw movement or the bit.

Ramps - sloping overgrowths typically seen on the lower back teeth.

Wave mouth - an uneven chewing surface where some teeth are higher than others, affecting proper grinding of food.

Step mouth - a pronounced height difference between adjacent teeth.

Loose, fractured, or missing teeth - particularly common in older horses and can impact feeding efficiency.

If we record any of these findings, we will always discuss what they mean and whether treatment or monitoring is required.

Body Condition Score (1-5 Scale)

We also include a Body Condition Score (BCS) in your horse's chart. This is a simple, standardised way of assessing body fat coverage and overall condition.

1 - Very thin - Ribs, spine, and hips very prominent. Little fat cover.

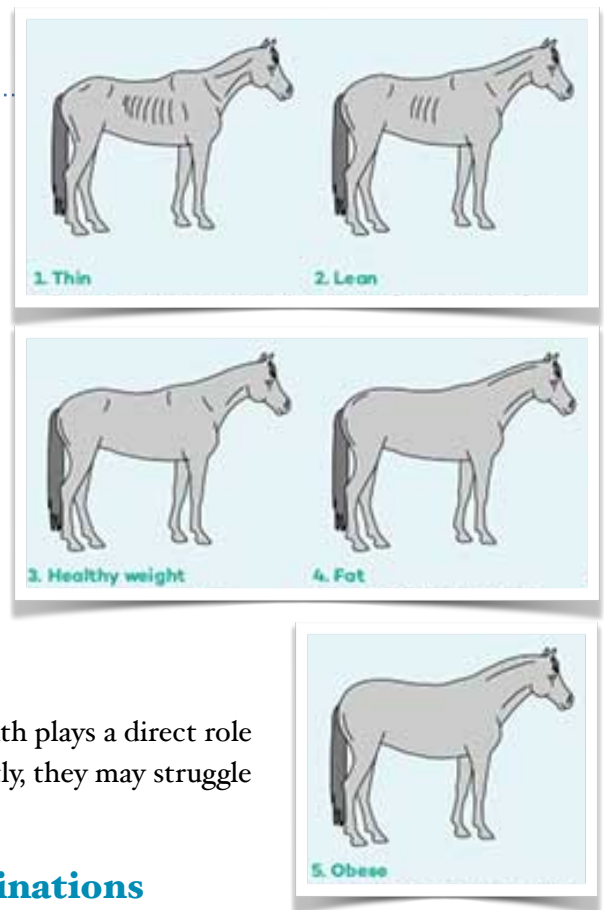
2 - Thin- Ribs easily visible. Minimal fat cover.

3 - Ideal - Ribs can be felt but not easily seen. Smooth outline over neck, back, and quarters.

4 - Overweight - Ribs difficult to feel. Noticeable fat deposits.

5 - Obese - Large fat deposits over neck, shoulders, and hindquarters.

Maintaining a score around 2.5-3 is ideal for most horses. Dental health plays a direct role in maintaining good body condition - if a horse cannot chew efficiently, they may struggle to maintain weight even on adequate feed.



Why We Recommend 6-Monthly Dental Examinations

Horses' teeth continuously erupt throughout much of their lives. Because of this:

- Sharp enamel points can redevelop within months.
- Minor imbalances can become significant problems if left unchecked.
- Changes (such as small diastemata or developing waves) are much easier to manage when caught early.



Regular 6-monthly examinations allow us to:

- ✓ Prevent painful ulceration
- ✓ Maintain efficient chewing and digestion
- ✓ Detect early signs of periodontal disease
- ✓ Monitor changes in younger and older horses
- ✓ Support performance and comfort in ridden horses

Some horses (very young, elderly, or those with known dental abnormalities) may require more frequent monitoring, but twice-yearly checks are appropriate for most patients.

The Bigger Picture

Good dental care isn't just about teeth - it supports:

- Digestion efficiency
- Weight maintenance
- Comfort in the bridle
- Behaviour and performance
- Long-term health and welfare

If you ever have questions about your horse's dental chart or body condition score, we're always happy to talk you through it. Thank you for trusting us with your horse's care.

If you have any concerns about your horse's health or dental health please call us on 01328 864444

