

WENSUM VALLEY VETS EQUINE NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2023



Equine Odontoclastic Tooth Resorption and Hypercementosis (EOTRH):

EOTRH is a painful condition resulting in deterioration most commonly of the incisors and canines of older horses and ponies.

It is often detected at routine dental examination, however usually owners notice an issue regarding their horse's eating behaviours and weight maintenance.

In this month's newsletter we will discuss the potential causes, diagnosis and treatment of this condition.

What Is It?

EOTRH causes severe changes to the tooth roots and surrounding gums in the mouth. The exact cause is not yet fully understood but the disease tends to follow one of 3 patterns:

1. Tooth root resorption
2. Hypercementosis (whereby the tooth lays down excess cement – the substance that covers the outside of the tooth- this happens to help stabilise the tooth)
3. A combination of both above

These processes compromise the ligament that holds each tooth in place (periodontal ligament) causing them to loosen.

As the disease progresses, changes to the gum tissue and surrounding bone occur setting up an environment more susceptible to bacterial infection, worsening the condition.



Signs to Look For:

Clinical signs can vary greatly depending on stage at which the condition is found, but typical signs to look for include:

- Difficulty eating – your horse should be easily able to bite through a carrot – this can be a good test.
- Reduced appetite – due to pain on eating
- **Weight loss**
- Bad breath – due to secondary bacterial infection
- Irritability due to discomfort/ head shaking
- Resistance to gag application during dental examinations

On looking at the teeth:

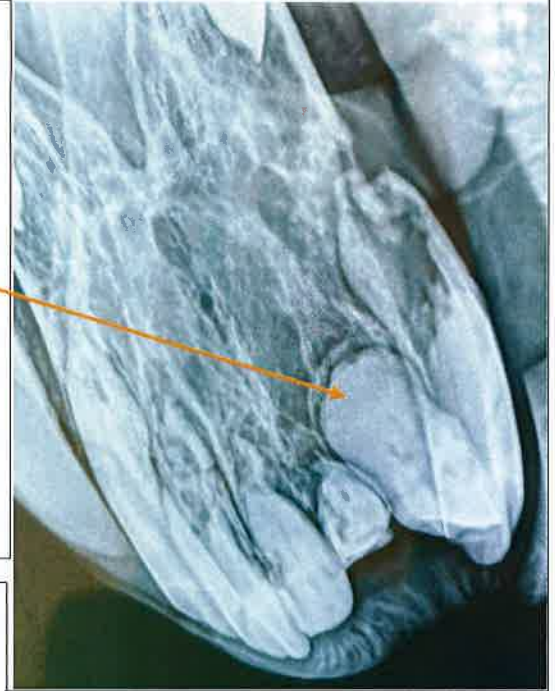
- Inflamed gums at the base of the teeth and/or gum recession
- Sores on the gum surface – may be seen if infection is present
- Cementum build-up giving a bulb like appearance to the tooth
- Tooth displacement, fracture or loss

Diagnosis:

Often EOTRH is picked up at routine dental exams and due to the slowly progressive nature of the condition small changes in feeding behaviour and horse demeanour can go unnoticed.

Radiographs (X-rays) of the incisors and canines will show tooth root resorption and hypercementosis (this can look like bulbous tooth roots- as seen on image).

An easy test you can do yourself is the '**Carrot Test**': Offer your horse a carrot – they should be able to easily bite through using their incisor teeth – if they find this difficult or cannot, it is an indication of incisor tooth pain and therefore EOTRH is possible.



Treatment:

Unfortunately, there is no treatment for EOTRH, and extraction of all affected teeth diagnosed on radiographs is the best option.

Seeing as EOTRH can affect all the upper and lower incisors +/- canines, don't be alarmed if extraction of all implicated teeth is proposed under local anaesthetic. It can look drastic, but wounds heal quickly and by removing the teeth you remove much of the bacterial contamination often associated.

Soon after extraction we have found horses are much more comfortable, eat better, are happier in themselves and start to put weight on again. It is remarkable how well a horse can manage to graze with no incisors, but some dietary changes may need to be made to help them along.

On 7th March, Lauren is leading a course on 'Equine First Aid'.

*Due to high demand, she will be running a second course date – **18th April at 10am** –ring reception to book in soon to avoid missing out as spaces are going fast! Price is £24 pp.*

Topics covered include:

- Wounds
- Lameness
- Colic

Conditions such as this highlight the importance of regular dental examinations. Tooth pain can significantly reduce a horse's quality of life. Having regular checks will identify issues such as this, allowing prompt treatment and return to health.

If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01328 864444

