



# Park Veterinary Centre

256 Cassiobury Drive. Watford. Herts. WD17 3PA

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## EQUINE DENTAL CARE

It's almost certainly an old wives tale that 'only old horses need dental attention' when in fact the majority of younger horses (3-4 years old and upwards) benefit greatly from simple dental procedures. After all the greatest 'activity' within the horses' jaw is occurring between birth and five years of age, associated with the eruption and shedding of teeth, introduction of a bit and several changes in nutrition during that time!

Racehorses that embark on a training career for flat racing receive dental attention as young as 18 months of age and apart from the physical benefit of this, if done correctly and with 'T L C', in our opinion produces a much more tolerant animal when it comes to dental procedures later on in life.

We therefore recommend that as soon as young horses are about to embark on a ridden/driven lifestyle a dental check should be carried out preferably by your veterinary surgeon who is in a position to remove any unwanted teeth at that time (i.e. wolf teeth, retained 'baby teeth', front or back) as well as 'rasping smooth' all relevant sharp edges. Advice at that time, depending upon the state of the mouth, jaw alignment etc., will be given as to the need for once or twice yearly dental check-ups. The majority of horses between the ages of 6 and 16 only require once yearly attention and there is a school of thought that 'over-rasping' of teeth can be nearly as detrimental as infrequent rasping.

It would appear that over the last few years more horses require sedation for simple dental procedures. There are probably many different reasons for this; as a result of 'dental-phobia' and the increased usage of heavy metal gags that are definitely not handler-friendly, in an ill-behaved horse. Therefore, on occasions, the attendant equine dentist will request a visit from the veterinary surgeon purely to sedate the horse, thereby increasing the cost of this procedure many-fold. One way of keeping this type of cost to a minimum is requesting that your veterinary surgeon carry out a dental check on the same visit as your horses' annual or 6 monthly vaccination.

If your horse is sedated for clipping or any other routine procedures always remember to have the teeth checked.

As a general, rule our practice is supportive of equine dentists who in many instances perform an excellent job but we wish our clients to be aware of our ability and desire to continue providing dental care for their horses wherever possible.

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