



Q&A FROM A HORSE DENTIST

Grant D. MacKinnon C.Eq.D.

Certified graduate of the Academy of Equine Dentistry &
proud member of the Association of Equine Dental Equilibration



Do you mind if I watch?

Absolutely not, in fact I encourage my clients to see and feel the difference of their horse's teeth before and after I perform the work. This is something that I feel strongly about.

You should have the opportunity to ask questions throughout the entire procedure.

There are no secrets to proper horse dentistry and when someone is working on your horse you had better be able to watch and see exactly what is being done. If they don't want you to watch, be concerned they are not confident in their ability to explain or not competent in their ability to achieve it.



Many of my clients relate former equine dental experiences. Such as, they were required to drop the horse off – unable to stay and watch, much less ask questions as to the purpose of the various procedures performed. Some were required to pick up their horse, pay the bill with little or no explanation as to what was done nor the purpose for the procedure.

I cannot speak for every dentist, however in my own practice there are very specific actions and behaviors that I prefer to confirm with each and every owner, trainer or rider while performing dentistry. I work to explain the bio-mechanics of the mouth as I balance their horse's mouth. I also provide reason and explanation of the exact procedures in order to attain the utmost comfort and function of that particular horse.

I like to discuss their horse's head set, lead changes, gate transitions, turning ability, stopping and backing up – as all of these maneuvers directly correlate to the comfort and function their horse's mouth. Moreover, while I am working, this is the time that their horse's teeth are visible and safely palpable at which time I can identify the tooth or teeth causing the specific riding problem(s).

I also believe that it is important to provide support data and further explanation in writing, pamphlets and brochures to each client so they can continue to refer to it as they note positive changes they individually

experience. Due to the fact that horse's teeth are not in plain view and few owners / riders explore for much more than wolf teeth. The "packet" of information provided by my practice helps keep the importance of regularly maintained teeth in the forefront of their minds.

When proper equine dentistry is performed you should be able to see and feel:

- proper angles maintained throughout an arcade; reductions of only necessary protuberances;
- melding of these angles of occlusion together with the comfort provided by removing sharp points and reducing or extracting non-functional teeth;
- leaving each mouth having optimized the prophylaxis of each tooth to its full functional potential; and finally
- leave balance in each uniquely shaped mouth.

Remember, all undesirable actions are compensatory to any point of pain and attributes to a horse's balance and ability to perform. If you are experiencing undesirable behaviors while riding your horse, have a certified equine dentist take a look and get the answer '*straight from your horse's mouth*'.

If you have a question about your horse's teeth and how they might relate to his health or performance call 1-306-266-2060, 1-403-936-5394, 1-208-420-2701 or e-mail mackequine@sasktel.net.