



## Q&A FROM A HORSE DENTIST

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### What Makes Your Dentistry Different Than the Traditional “Float”?

In this business, after working at one barn all day, I'm quite often directed to another; forever being introduced to new facilities, new clients and different riding styles. However, regardless of the location, I am always asked by someone, “what makes your dentistry different than anyone else”.

The goal of the properly trained equine dentist all comes down to two movements. Full, free lateral excursion which is simply, side to side movement of the jaw, and anterior, posterior movement of the mandible which in layman's terms is the forward and backward movement of the jaw.

Although, specific requirements for obtaining proper equine dentistry are: equal clinical crown height; correct molar table angles; correct incisor table angles; three point balance of the temporomandibular joint, cheek or molar teeth and incisors; full lateral excursion of the mandible or jaw; and maximum occlusion of the available incisors and cheek or molar teeth. It is only when all six of these outlined objectives are met that a horse has full side to side, forward and backward movement of the jaw, providing overall comfort during all activities.

When we understand that the top teeth are embedded in the skull, then realize that the bottom teeth are embedded in the jaw and are the only teeth that move. Why is this important to the average Joe horse owner as well as the professional looking to win the world? Because, when a horse stops, his jaw slides forward; when a horse turns, his jaw slides forward and to the direction he's asked to turn. Therefore, these two movements of the jaw, side to side, forward and backward, have everything to do with efficient riding (and efficient eating.) Every horse should have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of proper dentistry.

Another often overlooked aspect of equine dentistry are the front teeth or nippers which is the key to a horse's balance. They are difficult to get right and many would prefer to let the horse owner believe they are not required when performing dentistry. Balance is not achieved if you only address one point (molars); and when addressing only one point (molars) a horse is taken further out of balance. The front teeth dictate how efficient the molars function. If you are getting your horse's “teeth” done and whomever is performing the dentistry is not addressing the front they are missing the boat. That's why it is called three-point-balance and considered one of the most important aspects of equine dentistry.

Always remember, balance offers ideal ride-ability as well as eat-ability in your equine partner. Properly maintaining your horse's teeth saves not only money on your feed bill but makes riding an enjoyable event. Your horse's dentition is after all, your horse's longevity. The longer your 'good' horse has 'good' teeth, the longer you will enjoy your 'good' horse.

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If you have a question about your horse's teeth and how they might relate to his health or performance call (306) 266-2060 or e-mail your question to [mackequine@sasktel.net](mailto:mackequine@sasktel.net).