



In this issue:

- Holiday Hours
- Equine Dentistry
- The Rescue Horse

Equine General Dentistry

Holiday Hours

We will have modified hours between December 21st, 2020 through January 4th, 2021. Please make sure all prescriptions are called in and picked up within our modified schedule.

	Office	Veterinarian
Dec 21st - 24th	9am - 2pm	Emergencies & Urgent appointments only.
Dec 25th - 27th	CLOSED	Emergencies only.
Dec 28th - 31st	9am - 2pm	Regular appointments 9am-2pm, Emergencies after hours.
Jan 1st - 3rd	CLOSED	Emergencies only.
Jan 4th	8:30am - 5pm	Regular appointments 9am - 5pm.



We've all heard the old saying warning us not to look a gift horse in the mouth, but in reality it's a very good practice to check your horse's oral health on a regular basis.

Horses have unique teeth compared to humans, dogs or cats, and as such their mouths require special consideration. Horses have *hypsodont* teeth, which refers to teeth with a large reserve below the gumline that continues to slowly erupt through the animal's life. This provides more tooth to replace what has been worn down by eating hay and other rough foods. By contrast humans, dogs, and cats all have *brachydont* teeth, which do not have any reserve crown below the gumline and do not continue to erupt once the adult teeth are present. Both varieties of teeth are composed of **enamel, cementum, and dentin**. Unlike *brachydont* teeth that have these three components layered one over the other, *Hypsodont* teeth have enamel, dentin, and cementum in multiple layers through the teeth, creating rough ridges on the chewing surface to allow the grinding of rough feed.

Because horse's teeth are continually erupting and wearing down as they grind their food, and because their upper jaw is slightly wider than their lower jaw, sharp points eventually develop on the cheek sides of their upper cheek teeth and the tongue sides of their lower cheek teeth. Over time these sharp points can create ulcers in the horse's cheeks and tongue, making chewing painful for them.

A horse with an otherwise healthy, normal mouth will require a float every 1-2 years to reduce these sharp points and maintain a comfortable, ulcer-free mouth. It is recommended to have your horse's teeth checked annually to evaluate for sharp points, periodontal disease, loose teeth, or the development of asymmetries between the sides of the mouth which would warrant additional management. Your veterinarian is the best resource to help you determine the most appropriate plan for your horse's oral health, now and as their mouth changes with age. Contact our office if you have any concerns about your horse's oral health and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Rescue Horse

There isn't an equestrian that doesn't have their heartstrings pulled at the sight of starving, neglected or abused horses. Some brave souls choose to rescue these horses whether from auction or through an organization; investing a lot of time, money and effort into their care. It can be extremely rewarding to see these horses flourish and find their "Forever Home". Other cases do not fair so well, succumbing to their ailments. Rescuing horses is not for the faint of heart and not without inherent challenges. For anyone thinking of taking on the challenge, here is a list of the common ailments and conditions of rescue horses that could need addressing:

- 1) External and internal parasites:** Heavily parasitized horses may require careful treatment protocols due to their parasitic loads and weakened health status.
- 2) Gastric Ulcers:** Caused by stress from previous environments, transport, neglectful husbandry etc., gastric ulcers are a common finding. Diagnosis involves gastroscopy and treatment can be costly.
- 3) Neglected dental care & hoof care:** Abnormal growth or overgrowth of hooves or sharp dental points may necessitate frequent visits from the farrier and veterinarian to correct the abnormalities.
 - a. Link to resource on aging horses by their teeth: <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g2842>
- 4) Lameness:** Rescue horses may have incurred injuries which were not appropriately addressed, or which precipitated them being sent to auction. Some of these lamenesses may be treated, while others may not resolve.
- 5) Behavioural Issues:** Fear, abuse, inadequate handling, or poor training can all cause significant and potentially dangerous behaviours that require time and expertise to address. There are some calming supplements and sedatives available that can help with training and increase safety for those involved.
- 6) Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA):** EIA is a life-threatening and reportable bloodborne disease, transmitted between horses by mosquitoes. Performing a Coggin's test will determine if the horse is free of the disease and ensure the safety of other horses in the vicinity.
- 7) Respiratory viral infections:** Rescue horses can acquire viral infections during transport or they can have a re-emergence of dormant respiratory viruses. These horses can then spread the viral infection to the rest of your herd. Following isolation and biosecurity protocols (at <https://swiftsureequine.com/client-education/care-instructions/on-farm-quarantine/>) will help keep the rest of your horses healthy.
- 8) Malnutrition:** Horses that are severely malnourished need conservative feed changes. Unlimited access to high caloric density feeds can incite dangerous changes to the fragile GI tract. Start with feeding high quality hay, and vitamins and minerals. Seek veterinary advice before feeding other high calorie feeds.



Figure 1 (AAEP): Lice nits on a horse.



Figure 2: Parasite eggs identified under microscope.



Figure 3: An estimate of horse's age can be made by your veterinarian through an examination of their teeth.

Unwanted horses are an ongoing problem in the global equine community. Responsible horse ownership, breeding, and training are key to ensuring horses find "Forever Homes". As much as all equestrians want to save every horse, keep in mind that not all horses can be rehabilitated. Sometimes, offering them a pain-free and stress-free death is the kindest thing we can do. With adequate preparation, perspective, and support, relieving the suffering of an animal can be a rewarding endeavour.

SEVS veterinarians and staff welcome every opportunity to play a small part in the process of welcoming a rescue horse to their new home and to help give these horses a second chance.