



**VITAL EQUINE HOLISTIC VETERINARY MEDICINE, INC.**

## **Equine Odontoclastic Resorptive Tooth and Hypercementosis (EORTH), Calculi, Tartar and Periodontal Disease**

EORTH and dental disease in horses are very similar to dental disease in humans, cats and dogs; we just call it something different. Bacteria aggregate on the horse's teeth just like dogs and cats from not brushing or flossing daily. The bacteria form plaque which over time turns to tartar when left untreated. The gold standard for dental care is at-home treatment every single day. Having your own teeth cleaned by a dental hygienist once or twice a year while not brushing or flossing at home would have devastating consequences to your own dental health. This is what is happening to your horse-- and we only float their teeth, we don't brush them!! What's worse is that most owners don't even LOOK in their horse's mouths.

Hay treated with pesticides, herbicides, dyes, preservatives and other unknown harmful chemicals come into contact with the teeth and gums with each and every bite of food all day every day. Commercial grain products such as Cavalor, Purina and the like are full of fillers, sugar, preservatives, synthetic ingredients and chemicals. This is inflammatory to the dental tissues (teeth, gums, ligaments etc) and makes the horse's mouth more susceptible to the bacteria-plaque-tartar-decay cycle. It can also lead to cancer over time. The number one cause of cancer, after all, is inflammation. Some of the most deadly, incurable, painful, malignant tumors of the horse occur in the mouth.

Some horse owners then have their horse's teeth power floated year after year which also adds to the vicious cycle. Power floating can easily cause damage to the roots because of excess heat if not done properly or if too much tooth is taken off too quickly due to the nature of the power tools themselves, never mind the skill of the person operating it. If the incisors are not filed at the same time as the molars, imbalance in "bite" occurs and an extra several hundred pounds of pressure is placed on the incisors/front teeth leading to even more damage and weakness to those teeth, gums and periodontal ligaments.

On top of that, Cushing's disease (excess cortisol and hormonal imbalance) is also likely to potentiate this dental problem because excess cortisol weakens the periodontal ligaments and suppresses the immune system leading to greater chance of infection.

Stress of any kind, which increases cortisol, will also affect this condition.

Vaccines will also potentiate this process, ESPECIALLY in a cushingoid horse. Do not underestimate this statement. This is also true for dogs with cushings.

Genetics can also work for or against the horse. Same for dogs and other living beings.

This perfect storm of all factors considered above, brings radical damage to the periodontal ligaments that keep the teeth in place within the gum tissue and strongly attached to bone. As these structures weaken, openings from inflammation occur and the teeth become loose. Bacteria enter deeper into these loose sites of inflammation and any pockets that open up which drives relentless damage, infection and pain.

Over time, the horse will have trouble eating because of the infection and pain, can have abscessed teeth and then traditional vets will want to remove the front teeth (incisors) because they have become such a problem for the horse and no other options seem to exist. Typically, no one even logically back tracks at this point to understand how the horse got here or tries to make any of the dots connect. What comes next isn't much better either.

After removal of the incisors, the tongue will no longer remain in the mouth as the front teeth are not there to keep the tongue where it should be anatomically. As such, the horse consistently loses the very necessary enzymes in its saliva to digest food that it keeps drooling from its mouth due to no longer having front teeth that would keep the tongue inside and the saliva with it. Enter, never-ending colic.

Rocky, in the images above, fortunately belongs to Dr. Fenton. She began brushing his front incisors after evaluation of his gum tissues when a routine dental exam prompted her to be concerned. Dental x-rays showed loss of the periodontal ligaments and resorption of some portions of the tooth body, indicating EORTH. He had only been power floated twice (not by Dr. Fenton) in the 22 years she has had him, but he was over power floated at age 19 when tooth eruption in horses slows down. One session of power floating was enough to damage his mouth permanently. He was not going to ever erupt enough tooth again in his lifetime to come back from the harm that was done. He also was diagnosed with Cushing's despite not being vaccinated repeatedly and only vaccinated when absolutely necessary. He is a very emotionally sensitive horse which means cortisol can easily be spiked or held high due to his personality/disposition. Certain breeds can be predisposed to metabolic diseases such as Cushing's-- Rocky Mountain Horses are one of them.

Nonetheless, he was under her care for all conditions. He was treated for Cushing's and blood work returned to normal showing Cushing's was completely regulated without the use of Prascend. Dr. Fenton successfully manages many Cushing's cases with herbs, nutrition, diet, acupuncture and frequency therapy. Infrared, blue light and red light laser therapy was used over the mouth based on muscle testing results. This therapy helps kill bacteria, reduce inflammation and alleviate pain. She began brushing Rocky's teeth daily at the time of morning nutrition supplementation using xylitol free tooth paste and a baby bristle tooth brush along with other oral remedies to break down and kill unwanted bacteria, plaque and tartar without the use of conventional antibiotic drugs. The plaque and tartar improved dramatically as seen in the photo. The inflammation in the surrounding gum tissues and draining tract of bacteria was much less inflamed and reduced in size.

Rocky receives repeat dental exams every 6 months, is only done by hand instead of power floating, is floated with extreme caution or none at all since too much tooth was taken off in the past and the objective is to preserve whatever he has.

This is a highly effective maintenance routine for horses that begin showing the signs of EORTH early on. It is a useful preventative strategy to help keep the process from spiraling out of control leading to pain, infection and surgical incisor removal. It is most effective when done early on and with at-home dental care like what Dr. Fenton does at least once daily. Internal health absolutely must also be at the forefront of treating the EORTH condition. Any and all disease states internally must be recognized and treated concurrently for best results.

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