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Dental management in horse

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Abstract

Oro-dental disease is common in equids, particularly when routine dental care is not undertaken and has been associated with poor body condition, weight loss and increased risk of colic. Normal wear and tear of teeth is very common in horses. However, due to negligence of dental health, many dental conditions remain undiagnosed, leading to pain and suffering for the animals, which is ultimately unethical. With proper knowledge of normal dental anatomy and advanced diagnostic approaches like scintigraphy, HGS and dental charting. Veterinarians can diagnose disorders early and manage them more effectively.

Keywords: Dentistry, dental chart, dental formula, dental rasping, horse grimace scale, scintigraphy

1. Introduction

Equine dentistry is a very important but neglected area of equine practice, with many horses suffering from undiagnosed, painful dental disorders [1]. Dental disease is the main oral disorder of horses and is of major importance in equine practice, with upto 10% of practice time involving dental related work. Dental problems are the third most common medical problem in large animal practice [2]. In addition, many postmortem studies have shown high levels of clinically significant, non-diagnosed dental disorders in horses. These conditions are particularly common in horses over 15 years of age, where they tend to be more severe and have higher incidences [3].

1.1 Dental Formula

$$\text{Deciduous} = \frac{I^3 C^0 PM^0 M^0}{I^3 C^0 PM^0 M^0}$$

$$\text{Permanent} = \frac{I^3 C^{0-1} PM^{3-4} M^4}{I^3 C^{0-1} PM^{3-4} M^4}$$

1.2 Permanent teeth eruption

Item	Needed
2.5 Years	Upper & lower central incisors
3.5 Years	Upper & lower intermediate incisors
4.5 Years	Upper & lower corner incisors
0.5 Year 2.5 Years	1 st Premolar (Wolf Teeth) 2 nd Premolar
3 Years 4 Years	3 rd Premolar 4 th Premolar
1 Year 2 Years	1 st Molar 2 nd Molar
3.5 Years 4-5 Years	3 rd Molar Canine Teeth

Where,

I= Incisor

C= Canine

PM= Premolar

M= Molar [4]

2. Common conditions

Common dental disease in horses including retained deciduous teeth, periodontitis, periapical infection and infundibular decay. Gingival hyperplasia, brachygnathia and odontogenic tumours are recognized less frequently. Odontogenic tumours including ameloblastomas and odontomas are encountered in horses [5].

3. Clinical Signs

The most common equine dental (and oral) disease is the development of sharp dental overgrowths, often termed 'enamel points', although these overgrowths will also include cementum and dentine if they become large. These overgrowths develop on the lateral buccal edges of the maxillary and the medial lingual edges of the mandibular CT and may cause lacerations of the cheeks and tongue during chewing. Likewise, soft tissue injuries from more focal dental overgrowths (colloquially and interchangeably termed 'hooks', 'beaks', 'steps' or 'ramps') from displaced teeth or from pain due to deep secondary periodontal disease (usually due to abnormal spaces between or besides the teeth- as discussed later) may result in small boluses of partially masticated food falling from the mouth during chewing, a condition termed 'quidding' [6].

4. Diagnostic Approach

Analysis of Equine Dental Disorders through Facial Expression using Horse Grimace Scale (HGS)

In this study, six distinct facial characteristics - (i) ear held stiffly backwards, (ii) tension above the eye area, (iii) orbital tightening, (iv) prominently strained chewing muscle, (v) strained mouth and nostrils and (vi) flattened profile with strained nostrils were evaluated in 33 adult horses (both males and females) regularly involved in sports or work activities. The evaluation of dental health using the HGS was performed immediately before diagnosis and 15 days after undergoing odontological treatment. Pain was scored indirectly by investigator, and the horses' faces were photographed and assessed based on expression by 3 HGS experts [7].

A significant decrease in pain was observed by experts after treatment. Scintigraphy with 99m Technetium methyl-diphosphate detected early periapical infections of equine cheek teeth, even before changes could be seen on radiographs or CT Scans [8].

The diagnosis of equine dental disorder was conducted through a detailed mouth examination using a full mouth speculum, accompanied by appropriate instruments such as an oroscope and a small diameter flexible fiberscope, along with sedation of the animals.

5. Treatment

The treatment approach includes dental scaling, dental rasping, composite fillings, dental bonding, dental cleaning, tooth extraction, root canal therapy and proper diet management along with the analgesics - are the line of treatment as per the condition [4].

6. Advance Dental Care

A well-designed dental chart can provide the veterinarian a systemic template to record the state of health of oral cavity. It is a single chart encompasses oral examination findings and treatments, including owner information, patient signalment, primary complaint, body condition score, body weight, physical examination findings and a timeline of sedative/analgesic drugs administered during procedures [9].

7. Conclusion

With proper care and management of proper diet, regular dental examination and meticulous maintenance of individual dental charts, equine dental conditions can be diagnosed early. This allows for timely and effective treatment, ensuring the well-being and performance of the horse.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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