

Dentistry

It is essential horses receive a regular dental check-up, at least once yearly. It may be recommended they are checked more often, if they have ongoing dental disease that needs monitoring.

Who can perform a dental check?

We recommend only appropriately qualified and insured professionals carry out dental exams and treatment.

These could be:

- **An equine veterinary surgeon**
- **A qualified equine dental technician (EDT)**
that is either a member of the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (they will have BAEDT after their name), or a Cat 2 member of the Worldwide Association of Equine Dentistry (WWAED)

People referring to themselves as horse dentists who do not hold the BAEDT or Cat 2 WWAED qualifications are not recommended by RDA. We cannot guarantee they are appropriately equipped with knowledge, skills or insurance.

What should a dental check involve?

- A focus on examination, not just a quick rasp
- Examining the incisors (front teeth) by parting the lips
- Placing a gag
- Flushing the mouth out with water to allow a detailed examination
- Visually examining the teeth, using an appropriate light source (often a head torch or light attached to the gag)
- Using a mirror inside the mouth to check areas of concern in more detail, a metal pick may sometimes be used to explore cavities or gaps between teeth (diastema)
- Palpation (feeling) of teeth
- Treatment will often involve: rasping (floating) of sharp enamel edges and overgrowths, amongst other things

Who can perform what in a horse's mouth?

Legally, equine dentistry is protected so only appropriately qualified people can perform it, ensuring equine welfare is upheld and treatments aren't carried out incorrectly or unnecessarily

- An **equine dental technician (BAEDT or Cat 2 WWAED)** can examine mouths, perform routine rasping with power tools, extract erupted wolf teeth, remove loose caps (baby teeth), extract very loose teeth (all extractions must be under the constant, direct supervision of a vet)

They cannot prescribe any medication. This includes local anaesthetic, sedation (oral or injected), pain relief or antibiotics

- An **equine veterinary surgeon** can provide sedation to examine mouths, take x-rays of the teeth and head, perform rasping, remove any teeth, widen diastemas, perform fillings, perform root canal work, perform tooth restorations or oral surgery. They may refer complicated dental problems to an equine vet that specialises in equine dentistry. *Only a vet can prescribe local anaesthetics, sedation, pain relief or antibiotics.* It may be cheaper for a vet to perform a dental check-up at the same time as the annual vaccination.

In cases of dental disease where further investigation or treatment is required, a vet is the best equipped, qualified and knowledgeable person to carry out the work.

Will the horse need sedating?

Some horses are calm enough to allow for a thorough examination and treatment without sedation, however if the horse is anxious or objecting, painful issues can be missed. Your vet or BAEDT will advise if they feel your horse or pony would benefit from sedation.

Further Guidance:

The British Equine Veterinary Association website provides useful further guidance:
<https://www.beva.org.uk/Resources-For-Owners/Guidance/Dentistry>

Ryan McCarthy RDA Regional Vet