Dentition

Horses, exclusive of grazing animals, and their teeth and mouth adapted to serve that function. Their teeth are divided into two major sections: the incisors, which are the teeth seen in the front of the horse’s mouth, and the cheek teeth, made up of the premolars and molars. The roots and premolars are lined up tightly against each other, creating the appearance of one chewing surface. This alignment of teeth is called the dental arcade. The incisors are separated from the cheek teeth by a large space. Canine teeth can be found in the space between the incisors and premolars. The incisor teeth are responsible for the grasping and tearing of food, while the cheek teeth are used for the grinding of food.

Young horses have a total of 24 deciduous or milk teeth - 12 incisors and 12 premolars or milk molars. Modern-day management of horses has less efficient.技术研发 and feed utilisation. de decrease the contact between the molars and premolars of the lower and upper jaws. Grinding decreases, resulting in less efficient digestion. Horses grazing pasture are able to use their teeth and jaws. The natural motion, thereby providing an advantage over stabled horses.

Stabled horses have little natural wear of the incisors, because of a lack of availability to tear or cut grass. As a result, these teeth grow too long, and decrease the contact between the molars of the lower and upper jaws. Grinding becomes less efficient, resulting in the development of dental irregularities, resulting in less efficient digestion and feed utilisation.

Chewing

In order for a horse to obtain food, it must first grasp the food. If they are grazing, the upper jaw (maxilla) slides slightly forward and the lower jaw (mandible) slides backward. As the head comes into position at the ground surface, the incisors (front teeth) should be aligned to cut or shear off the grass pasture. The lips, tongue, cheeks and hard palate work the food back into the mouth where the cheek teeth (premolars and molars) grind it up.

The chewing cycle is a repetition of a cyclical movement. The lower jaw opens and slides sideways, then closes with the upper jaw, and then grinds across. These steps are called the opening, closing and power stroke phases of chewing. Some horses will consistently chew or process their food in one direction; others will process or chew their food in two directions. The important point to remember is that chewing (mastication or grinding) requires significant motion of the upper and lower jaw in relation to each other. This motion is reduced as the horse eats smaller feed particles. Horses eating grains and pelleted feeds may chew in almost an up-and-down fashion.

Dental problems

Dropping feed while chewing, nasal discharge, foul-smelling breath, weight loss and poor feed utilisation might all be signs of dental disease. While the symptoms of dental diseases are often obvious, the actual cause of these symptoms requires a careful and detailed examination. For this reason, horses should have an oral exam once a year. It is important to do a complete oral exam and not just look at the teeth, as other disease processes may be present in the horse’s mouth.

Examining older horses

A large issue with older horses is dental problems. Horses that are missing teeth or have poor dentition must rely on alternate sources of pasture hay, as their ability to chew is limited. Forage products, such as hay cubes HYGAIN MICRBEET® and HYGAIN FIBRESENSE® can be used as substitute forage sources. Complete feeds that are high in protein, as well as lupins and soybean hulls, can be used as a quality forage source. These forage sources are often fed long or in a “mash” or “graze” form, to minimize stress of choke associated with the inability to properly chew.

You worry about their weight issues

Correct chewing and grinding of feed are essential to your horse's health and wellbeing. Supplying your horse with pasture and long-stem forage, along with regular dental care, will help your horse be healthier and have fewer dental problems. An annual dental care program should be an integral part of every horse’s health program.