The most common disease affecting horses is periodontal disease. The surface that is then available for the horse to pick up, chew, and grind food is often very poor, so one of the most important aspects of geriatric dental care is to ensure your horse has a good grinding surface going into old age, in other words don't wait until you have an old skinny horse to think about looking after its teeth. The wear that occurs is unlikely to be regular so overtime some teeth may be very tall or very short compared to the teeth around them, this has flow-on effects for rest of the horse's mouth and can cause difficulty with chewing and grinding.

The most common disease affecting horses is periodontal disease (gum disease); this disease is complex and will be the subject of a future article. Periodontal disease causes premature tooth loss, tooth mobility and pain and its effects are at their most devastating in older horses. Again the best treatment requires early diagnosis and intervention as well as regular dental checkups from your vet.

As horses age, just like people, there are changes in their metabolism and their ability to store fat and maintain muscle. Small changes may make a big difference to the comfort of your horse so vets generally recommend more frequent examinations and treatment as well as more aggressive intervention as needed. Older horses are more prone to developing calculus (a mixture of bacteria, food and saliva) on their teeth and this should be removed on a regular basis, your vet may also suggest applying an antibacterial solution to the teeth and even brushing them to prevent this build up and promote healthy gums.

Recently a form of periodontal disease known as Equine Odontoclastic Tooth Resorption & Hypercementosis (EOTRH) has been identified. It is an aggressive for of periodontal disease affecting older horses and no cure is available, however there is much your vet can do to prevent pain and suffering for an affected horse.

In conclusion, remember that dental care is a very important part of health care for all horses, but is particularly important for older horses. Schedule regular dental examinations for your horse and start early for best results.

Dental disease causes pain and suffering for many horses. It is very common, and often left untreated or incorrectly treated, due to a lack of understanding, poor equipment and limited training in this field.

Equine dental veterinarians have the knowledge, experience and equipment to prevent pain and offer horse owners the piece of mind that comes from working with professionals.

Use this site to find equine dental vets in your area and learn more about equine dental care and health. All veterinarians undergo extensive training in providing animal health care, and the vets listed on this site have all completed recognised further training specifically in equine dentistry.