

## NATURAL BALANCE DENTISTRY <sup>tm</sup>

In this day and age it is very important for horse owners to be educated about equine dentistry and what the differences are in methods, equipment, and even education requirements of the practitioner. In this world of high tech advancements, people look to make things easier for them, but is it better for the horse?

Equine Dentistry has been around for a long time. We know horses need dentistry, but why? In a way to further explain about dentistry and what the horse's needs are, it is important to understand the growth rate and how horse's teeth naturally wear. Horse's teeth are Hypsodont, meaning they are erupting over the life span of the horse. Once they no longer erupt, we call them expired, meaning, this is the residual clinical crown the horse will have for the remainder of its life. In the wild, the life of the horse's teeth far exceeds the life of our domesticated horse's teeth. We must be aware that incorrect and/or invasive methods will have an effect on the life of the horse's teeth and could cause the teeth to prematurely expire.

Horses have approximately 4" of clinical and reserved crown to last their life time. It is very important to only take that which nature would wear on its own (when given the proper living conditions). We want to mimic, in our domestic horses, the rate of wear to eruption just as horses do in the wild. We do not want to prematurely "expire" the teeth, because the teeth serve a purpose greater than merely eating. They bring stability and guidance to the jaw and the TMJ.

Through dentistry, it is crucial that while reducing the enamel to mimic natural wear, that the proper length and angles of all of the arcades of teeth be maintained, but especially those of the incisors. The length and angle of the incisors directly correlate to the TMJ.

Nerves and proprioceptors run through the TMJ which affects the horse from nose to tail. It is for this reason that Natural Balance Dentistry <sup>tm</sup> begins with the incisors. If the incisors are not balanced correctly, you will not achieve balance to the molar arcades or balance in the body.

It is a misconception that incisors will maintain themselves in our domesticated horses. They merely mutate as a response to the neglect (i.e. the long, angled, teeth of our older horses) We are only beginning to see the ramifications as a result of neglected incisors which have been compromised by reducing molars without also reducing and maintaining the incisors. Adversely changing angles or not addressing the incisors (which erupt at the same rate as the molars) will change the biomechanics of the jaw and the TMJ, which in turn will create imbalance in the body through neuromuscular and proprioceptor responses.

These neuromuscular responses can be responsible for postural changes and movement. The Stomatognathic System, also known as the Masticatory System, is comprised of nerves, muscles, and bones, including motor and sensory nerves, optic nerves, and those pertaining to the inner ear and balance. These neuromuscular responses ultimately effect movement. Compensatory responses then follow, and so do the problems associated with the changes, such as changes in posture and muscle

mass, bony changes, and even changes in hooves. A postural change as a result of dentition, through the stomatognathic system, has been studied in humans. Horses are no different.

In addition, we must also take into account the eruption rate over the lifetime of the horse, which slows down dramatically as the horse ages. The needs of the younger horse will be different than those of the older horse. It is very important to address the needs of the older horse very carefully, for what is done to them in their later years will stay with them until their death. So, one can see how the use of power instruments, or even hand instruments, when used incorrectly can cause severe damage, especially in an older horse. It is equally important to understand the needs of the younger horse and how dentistry can affect their future. We need to respect the young horse and give them an opportunity to fuse the growth plates in their skull (i.e. the use of the speculum and large equipment in the mouth), maintain proper incisor angles, and assist (if necessary) the eruption of permanent teeth (i.e. pulling caps). We must maintain their balance while their permanent teeth are erupting and keep them on the right path for their future.

In summary, the goal of Natural Balance Dentistry™ is to mimic natural wear of the teeth by maintaining the proper length and angles of the teeth, beginning with the incisors, which will maintain or restore the proper biomechanics of the jaw, and achieve centric relation of the TMJ. We do this while maintaining or achieving maximum occlusion, while taking into account that which is anatomically correct to that horse (i.e. age and breed).

Equine dentistry is more about biomechanics, muscle mass, and movement, than it is about eating. We maintain the teeth for all these reasons, but it is far more involved than merely the horse's ability to chew its food.

For more information regarding Natural Balance Dentistry™, and to find a practitioner located near you please visit: [www.advancedwholehosedentistry.com](http://www.advancedwholehosedentistry.com)

There are practitioners located throughout the United States

You can also access information and articles through my web site [www.thenaturalhoof.com](http://www.thenaturalhoof.com)

About me:

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