



WINNING EDGE HORSEMANSHIP DENTISTRY

FAQs

How Often Should Equine Dentistry Be Done?

The frequency of floating a horse is variable and is related to the individual horse. Often, we think of prevention on a mechanical device, like how often you change oil in a car's engine. The threshold of pain determines how frequently you need to float. In other words, how they perceive the sharp points against their cheeks and tongue.

Other determinants are genetics, age, and discipline. Some horse's teeth are softer or decay more quickly. Older horses have harder enamel and erupt less. Specific disciplines require more bit contact, while others don't need a bit.

The minor determinant of the frequency of floating should be the cost because the benefit of preventing pain inside the horse's mouth is well worth the little annual cost you spend getting it done. Plus, this one preventive act may help decrease other costs such as lost hay and grain (spilled or not eaten due to pain), lost training time (horse is more compliant and willing to learn), and decreased vet bills (a more comfortable horse is usually more healthy).

What is the Purpose of Floating a Horse's Teeth?

Removal of the source of pain from the mouth of the horse is the primary purpose of equine dentistry. Most problems or pathology of the horse mouth are secondary to pain. An observation over my decades of floating is the alignment of the teeth after about two years of dental care. It is as if they were

wearing braces. In addition, pathology, including local gum infections, resolves once the jaw and the tongue are allowed to move pain-free.

Medication – Why And When To Use Drugs In Equine Dentistry

Medications should be given when the horse asks for them. They allow the horse to cooperate with a painful procedure. This includes wolf tooth extraction, fractured tooth removal, and occasionally routine floating. Automatic sedation of horses for dentistry does not address oral pain, which is the most common reason for non-compliance.

If the horse needs pain relief, medicating the horse allows for completing the float, which is the goal of routine dentistry. This is the ethical use of medication in horses. With Horsemanship Dentistry, about 3 in 100 horses need medication (3%). This is based on my yearly medical statistics over the last ten years. Most of those medicated are for painful procedures, while the remaining are for routine floating. This means that some horses need medication to help them overcome their fear of the dentist (anxiety).

The automatic use of medications for routine dentistry is unnecessary. Dentists who automatically “sedate” horses for routine dentistry were never taught how to perform it without medication. While being trained, they were taught that only an incomplete float could be achieved without drugs. This thought is disproved every day using Horsemanship Dentistry.

Why Don't You Use Power Tools?

Power tools (air or electric) used in equine dentistry can be effective when used by trained equine dentists, but eliminating horsemanship deprives the horse from being part of the process. What I don't like about power tool use is the immobilization of the horse, over-drugging, mouth jacking, and head suspension. This goes against every fiber of horsemanship I know. It is not in the horse's best interest and turns the art of the horsemanship approach to equine dentistry into the auto mechanics approach.

If we used these techniques on a human to build a relationship, dating would end. Think of it this way. How would you tell if the date likes you if s/he were drunk or drugged? If you are afraid of criticism from your date, or you lack

self-confidence or are insecure, eliminating the art of relationship building allows the date to occur. In Horsemanship Dentistry™, it is important to receive honest feedback from the horse, understand it, and change our approach.

Further, how much mechanical advantage is needed when using carbide steel float blades against tooth enamel? The answer is little, so using a motorized float is overkill. The only reason power is applied is it allows for the acceptance of immobilization, which is against horsemanship.