



Woodland View Equine Service

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NEWSLETTER – February 2011

February - Dental Health Month

It is estimated by the American Veterinary Dental Association that 70-80% of dogs and cats over 4 years of age suffer from dental disease. In an effort to educate the pet owning public about this completely preventable disease, February is designated as National Pet Dental Health Month. even though small animals (dogs and cats) are the target of this educational campaign, horse owners should also be aware of problems caused by dental disease and lack of proper tooth care.

We will address dogs and cats first and cover horses toward the end of this newsletter. As in people, yearly dental check ups are important in pets to identify and treat dental disease before it reaches advanced stages and become irreversible. If dental disease is left untreated it can result in pain and tooth loss and, much worse, can result in detrimental effects on your animal's heart, liver and kidneys by seeding bacteria into the bloodstream that, subsequently, infect these vital organs.

Symptoms

The first sign that your pet needs dental attention is bad breath. Other signs include inflamed gums (gingivitis), tartar build up, difficulty chewing and weight loss. Pick up your pets gums and have a look. If you see tartar (an accumulation of a hard tan or brown substance starting at the gum line and extending down the tooth) buildup on the outside of the K-9 and premolar teeth, then dental cleaning is long overdue. A build up of bacteria on the teeth starts this process which leads to plaque, which then hardens turning to tartar and is visible. The gums become inflamed when the bacteria and tartar work their way down between the gum and tooth, eventually

loosening the periodontal structure which anchors the tooth to the bone. Thus, the term "Periodontal Disease" which, by the way, often leads to tooth loss. Recently in a journal article a case was presented and an x-ray shown of a small breed dog with severe dental disease that had a tooth fall out and he inhaled it! It had become lodged in the large airway of the lung. Tooth disease is a SERIOUS problem.

Treatment

As in people, cleaning, scaling and polishing a pets teeth on a yearly basis is the only way to get rid of tartar buildup. In pets, general anesthesia is required to accomplish this. While the animal is under anesthesia the teeth are first cleaned using a high speed vibrating scaler and then polished to smooth the surface of the tooth, much like your Dentist polishes your teeth. A smooth surface helps prevent bacteria and plaque from reattaching to the teeth.

Prevention

Feeding hard food and daily brushing can help prevent or slow the reoccurrence of tartar. Most pets can be trained to accept brushing their teeth. This is often started by applying PET toothpaste to a gauze pad wrapped around your finger and gently rubbing the outside of the teeth. Pet toothpaste is different than human toothpaste and does not harm the pets stomach if swallowed. In addition, pet toothpaste comes in different flavors that are more appealing to animals. We offer several tooth brushing products.

Three Steps to Success

The American Veterinary Dental Society recommends that pet owners follow three basic steps to successful dental health management.

Step 1: Take your pet to the Veterinarian for a dental exam. After the exam, he can recommend further procedures if needed.

Step 2: Begin a dental care regimen at home, which includes brushing.

Step 3: Schedule regular veterinary check ups so your Veterinarian can monitor the progress of your pet's dental health routine.

HORSE DENTISTRY

Horses are living much longer now than in the past and if not cared for properly, a horse's teeth can wear out. In addition, as is the case in pets, periodontal disease (destruction of the attachment of the tooth to the bone) and tooth decay are the leading causes of tooth loss in the horse. Both of these conditions can be prevented if caught early. That is why yearly dental exams and floating are extremely important starting at a young age.

Salivary secretions in the horse help clean the teeth. Processed feeds can lead to decreased salivary production. In addition, chewing forage causes more side to side chewing and less up and down chewing. Side to side chewing discourages the formation of sharp points on the teeth as well as pocketing of feed material between the teeth. This feed material becomes entrapped and bacteria causes it to ferment. This, in turn, causes an infection around the gums and can lead to a loosened, and eventually a lost tooth. Mal-occlusions and over-grown teeth can lead to abnormal chewing and subsequent feed impactions around teeth.

Recently we have seen several horses with teeth that have split longitudinally and, in doing so, have moved out of their normal alignment and to the inside - toward the tongue. This is caused by feed packing into the infundibulum (center) of the tooth and causing decay which eventually leads to destruction of the tooth.

The bottom line is that your horse needs a dental exam yearly starting as a yearling. We can prevent many of these problems if they are identified early. These problems can only be seen by examining your horse with a bright light source with the animal sedated and with his mouth held open with a speculum.

At Woodland View Equine Service we will be offering a 10% discount on routine pet teeth cleaning during the month of February (Dental Health Month).

Horse owners can also take advantage of a 10% discount on routine dental floating.

To schedule an appointment call 937-492-2451