
Animal Teeth: Horses And Dogs

Dogs have deciduous teeth, which means that they fall out and get replaced by larger permanent sets of teeth. Partially due to this, puppies and adult dogs both have different numbers of teeth. Adult dogs having 6 incisors, 2 canines, 5 premolars and 2 molars on one side of the mouth for a total of 42 with both side. Then puppies having 6 incisors, 2 canines and 6 premolars on one side of the mount for a total of 28 with both sides.

Horses also have deciduous teeth, but the numbers for juveniles and adults differ in comparison to dogs. Juveniles have a total of 24 teeth, while the number for adult males and females varies between have a 44 and 36-44 respectively. This variance in teeth number as an adult is due to horses having a variation in the amount of premolars they have on the upper jaw. Horse teeth are also unique from dog teeth in that they are hypsodont, as in they have crowns that extend below the gingiva, which allows for a root structure that continually grows a horses teeth throughout its life, only being grinded down via the act of chewing.

Prophylaxis is normally performed in cases of extremely high plaque, calculus and tartar build up. Though this kind of build up tends to be more common in dogs and cats than in horses. Prophylaxis can also be used as a period of time to asses teeth and gums for serious dental diseases and infection, as well as to create a history on the patients status. Potential removal of damaged or broken teeth is also a common reason to perform prophylaxis. For horses specifically it is also common to "float" teeth, a process of manually wearing down teeth via metal rasps and other electric or non electric tools, to prevent them from growing unevenly or developing sharp edges or cracks. This is important dental care given allowing a horse teeth to grow unrestrained can lead to them causing sores, mouth pains and trouble eating("What Does It Mean to Float Teeth?", 2007)

For dogs prophylaxis you start by anesthsize and intubating the animal. You then lie them down sideways with the mouth facing sloped downwards towards a drain.Placing towels and absorbent materials under an animals head, will also help keep it dry. It's important to wear protective gear like gloves, goggles and masks, to lower the chance of inhaling bacteria.

Calculus is removed most commonly using mechanical ultrasonic scalers. When using an ultrasonic scaler be sure not to keep it in specific parts of the teeth for longer than a 3 seconds at a time, in order to avoid causing damage to the teeth. Hand scalers and currents can be used to remove any remaining plaque or calculus afterwards.

Next you need to polish the teeth in order to smooth out irregular surfaces caused by the scaling process. Prophylaxis past or flour pumice is typically used for this step and spread with an electronic polishing tool. Next you need to irrigate the animal's mouth. Most commonly the irrigation fluid will by .02% chlorohexidine solution. While irrigating take specific care to hit the section between the tooth and fee gingival called the gingival sulcus. The final main step of standard prophylaxis is checking the teeth for pockets with a periodontal probe. Clinical action may be required based on the depth of the pockets, with depths of around 5 mm requiring surgical intervention and depths of 9mmm potentially requiring tooth extraction.

In the case an extraction needs to be performed, a vet will perform either a simple, sectioned or surgical extraction. Simple extraction places a dental elevator underneath of a tooth that doesn't have more than one root and dental extractors to break down a periodontal ligament and pull out a tooth. Sectioned extraction uses a drill in addition to a dental elevator and extractor to break apart a tooth into multiple sections in order to remove a tooth at multiple attached roots one by one, rather than as a group. Finally surgical extractions require bone itself to be cut, typically due to an inability to reach a tooth's root from with more standard methods. Removal of teeth tends to result in the need for suturing and antibiotics.

When comparing a horse and a dog, they have some basic similarities when it comes to cleaning or extraction. However in addition to horses requiring their teeth to be floated, a horses teeth may be evaluated while it's still awake to check for swelling of the mouth, lips and other extremities.

A horse will also have a speculum placed in its mouth and have its head placed on a stand of some kind when sedated for prophylaxis, rather than being played down on its side like a dog would.

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