

Mackinnon Equine Services, Ltd.

United States Office: P.O. Box 333, Loring, Montana 59537-0333 (208) 420-2701

Canadian Office: Box 23049 South Hill P.O., Prince Albert, Saskatchewan S6v 8A7 (306) 747-2724 (403) 936-5394 e-mail: mackequine@sasktel.net

WOLF-TEETH

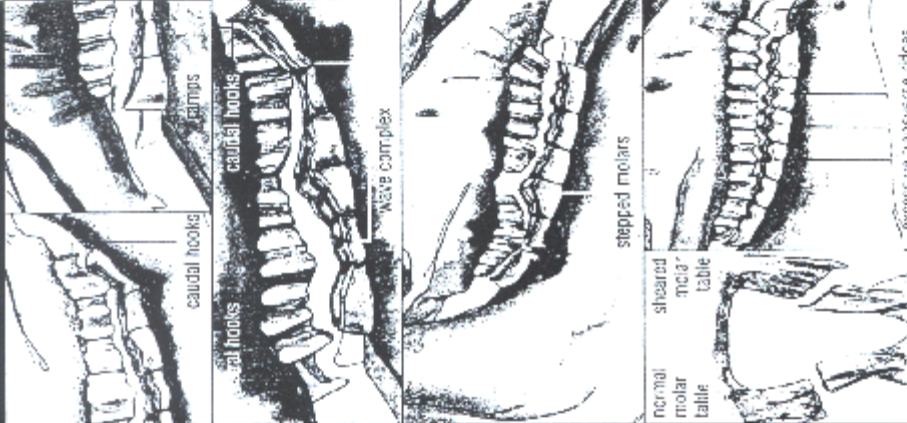


Named for their pointed shape, wolf teeth are vestigial of the prehistoric horse's dental arrangement and serve no useful function. Blind wolf teeth usually grow in at an angle and do not penetrate the gums.

WOLF TEETH ARE SHARP AND CAN BE IRRITATING, ESPECIALLY WHEN A HORSE IS FITTED WITH TACK THAT INCREASES THE PRESSURE ON HIS MOUTH.



ABNORMAL WEAR PATTERNS

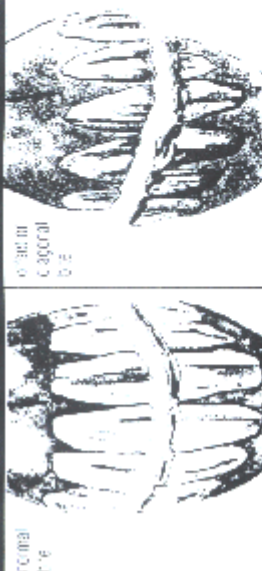


A horse can develop several types of wear problems (right), particularly in the rear molars, without obvious outward signs. That's why annual dental exams are so important. With the horse sedated and fitted with a speculum that holds his mouth open, a veterinarian can see and palpate the entire oral cavity. In addition, he may want to observe the horse eating and bridled and in work.

likely to change the horse's bite over time by pulling the lower jaw forward or pushing it back. "Rimps" may occur when the upper front premolar baby tooth is retained, preventing normal growth of the permanent premolar," says Johnson. The opposing permanent tooth wears unevenly, developing a ramp. Both ramps and hooks can cut or scrape the tongue or cheek, especially when the horse is bitted.

"Wave mouth" occurs when two or more teeth in an arcade are high, creating a series of ascending and declining grinding surfaces in a wavelike shape. This severely restricting occlusal abnormality can be the end stage of another neglected malocclusion, such as missing teeth or hooks or rimps. It is not properly mixed baby teeth may dilate wear mouth. "Wave mouth" can set in early around age 6, and gradually gets worse," says Johnson.

BITE AND INCISOR PROBLEMS



When the upper and lower jaws are aligned, the incisors above and below meet squarely.

Overbite or overjet chewing can cause the molars to wear unevenly, resulting in an offset bite.

Retention of baby teeth or abnormal chewing can cause the outer corner lower incisors to grow longer than the opposing teeth above, producing ventral curvature. Likewise, dorsal curvature occurs when the outer corner upper incisors grow longer in relation to the teeth below.

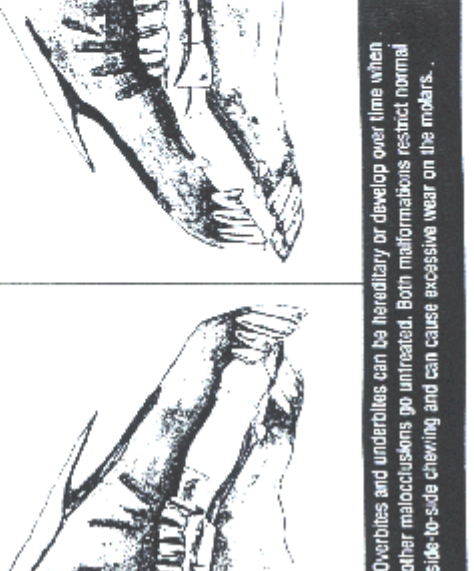
Patterns of neglect

When horses' mouths are left to wear as they will, a half dozen descriptively named abnormalities are "cultured" by imperfect chewing patterns.

"Sometimes sharp protrusions called hooks develop on the last or last cheek tooth when an overbite, underbite or other dental deformity causes an imperfect shearing of the top and bottom arcades. "Front" hooks are commonly caused when the upper first cheek teeth stick out in front of the lower first cheek teeth and the unopposed part of the upper tooth gets no wear," says equine dental specialist B. A. Rucker, DVM, of Lebanon, Virginia. "Over time, as the front hook gets longer, it thickens and pushes the [lower] jaw rearward, forcing the back-cheek teeth out of contact."

"Ramps are typically premolars with a surface that slopes like a ski jump. These abnormalities are

Overbites and underbites can be hereditary or develop over time when other malocclusions go untreated. Both malformations restrict normal side-to-side chewing and can cause excessive wear on the molars.



"A stepped molar has grown upright and thus unknown to that it juts above the rest of the arcade. A gap in the opposite molar lineup creates the abnormality, and the overgrown tooth can severely irritate chewing motions. Step molars can be corrected by filing or cutting the molar to the level of the rest of the tooth line.

"Sharp mouths describes a dental condition in which the molar's grinding surface is worn at a 60 to 75 degree angle rather than at the normal 35