

**During winter we occasionally struggle with weight loss in our horses. Various causes are investigated, such as basic nutrition, dental care and possible medical causes. I encourage everyone to become comfortable with body scoring and using a weight tape, and remember a heavy winter coat can be very deceiving.**

## \*\*\*EVENTS\*\*\*

- **20%** discount on dentals for the month of **January**
- Spring Wellness Special will run from March through May. Details will follow in next month's newsletter
- **MAY**- Showmanship/Equitation clinic
- **JUNE**- Centered Riding Clinic

**\*\*Please let me know if there's any interest for these clinics and I will officially schedule them. If there's no interest they will not occur. As always, I welcome ideas for clinics.**

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## Proper Dental Care

Dental care begins as early as six months of age. Every horse should be evaluated by a professional at least once a year. Some horses may need to be assessed more frequently. Horses get new teeth and lose baby teeth through their fourth year. They may lose adult teeth when they become geriatric age.

Occasionally horses have residual baby teeth, known as caps, which may have to be removed to allow the adult teeth to come in. They also may have wolf teeth that may interfere with bit placement and should be removed before two years of

age.

Horses chew in a grinding motion, which normally wears teeth. This grinding motion can cause areas that do not wear evenly and develop into sharp points that can make chewing painful. These occur on the outer most aspects of the upper and lower arcade.

Horses' teeth also grow in response to the opposite tooth; this is why if a horse loses a tooth or has damage to a tooth, the opposite tooth will overgrow due to lack of pressure on the healthy

tooth. This can easily be maintained with routine floating. Floating is the practice of filing a horse's teeth. This is generally not painful.

Signs that may be indicative of problematic teeth are chewing oddly, holding head sideways, dropping food, weight loss, difficulty putting bit in, throwing head while riding, foul odor, or excessive salivation.

Dental care should be performed by a professional. Many states require that this be only be done by a veterinarian.

## Equine Motor Neuron Disease

Equine motor neuron disease is nerve deterioration due to vitamin E deficiency. This most often occurs in horses with limited access to grass or on diet with low vitamin E concentrations.

Clinical signs include weight loss and muscle loss despite an excellent appetite. Horses often appear weak and hang their head low. They may also tremble, shift weight and lie down frequently, as well as sweat excessively after exercise.

The presentation is similar to ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) in humans.

The disease is usually sporadic; affecting only one horse in a stable. The Northeast has a high prevalence of EMND. The signs are progressive and can slowly increase over weeks to months.

Diagnosis is made verifying low vitamin E levels with a blood test.

Horses can be stabilized with high doses of vitamin E

and/or access to quality pasture if diagnosed early. When choosing a supplement it is best to use a supplement without selenium. Selenium can become toxic very easily. Many over-the-counter supplements contain selenium, therefore it is imperative to read label ingredients. Vitamin E toxicity is not a concern and very safe at high doses.