



BLENDING NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

**MARCH 2015**

newsletter

this month's issue



1. Nutrition as a Component of Equine Dental Care
2. Fabulous Fibre
3. Schooling success With Karen Keller
4. Contact Us

## Nutrition as a Component of Equine Dental Care

The old adage says “you are what you eat”—but that’s only if your teeth are up to the job! A horse might be offered a diet of high-quality hay, for instance, but if he’s unable to chew and digest that food properly, he could look ribby. As a result, it’s important to consider your horse’s dental status when planning his diet.

At the 2014 American Association of Equine Practitioners Convention held in Salt Lake City, Utah, Caroline N. Niederman, VMD, FAVD/Equine, described how nutritional assessment and dietary modification can be included into a regular equine dental care program.

Having an annual oral examination provides gives the opportunity not only to identify dental abnormalities, but also to document the loss of cheek-teeth chewing surface area that occurs with age as a product of normal dental eruption and wear.

Dental abnormalities can have a negative impact on how horses—especially older ones—consume and utilize the nutrients in food. As such, performing a complete oral exam affords the veterinarian with the opportunity to educate owners on how to provide adequate nutrition as the horse ages to prevent choke, impactions, and pronounced weight loss.

### The Complete Dental Exam

A complete oral examination begins by compiling a dental history, including questions such as:

- What and how often do you feed your horse?
- Does he have pasture access?
- Is your horse still able to consume hay? Does he leave any chewed, but undigested, boluses of hay behind (termed “quidding”)?
- Where is your horse fed, and is he separated from other horses at feeding time?
- How long does it take your horse to finish meals?
- Has he gained or lost weight in the past year?
- What do his faecal balls look like? Are they formed and moist, dry, or are there pieces of undigested hay?
- Is your horse on any medications?

## Testimonials

Dear Equus

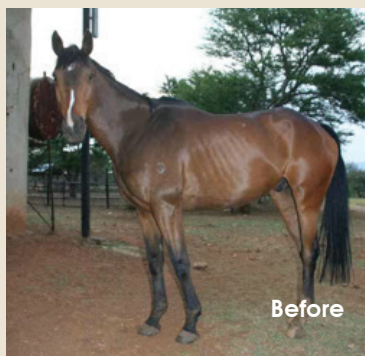
I thought I would email you and say a HUGE thank you for the amazing condition my dressage boy is currently in. I've been feeding him **Equus Cool 'n Perform 12%** and **Equus All Time Balancer** for the last couple of years and not only is he in amazing condition for a TB who lives out 24/7 but he is full of energy for his dressage career in which he is flying).

I haven't found a feed that is better than the Equus range, and I certainly won't be changing from it. I also use the **Equus Train 'n Leisure** for my other horses. I always recommend the range when people ask what I use.

Here's a before and after of my 10 year old TB Sharp Sharp.

Thank you again Equus Horse Feeds!

Kind regards  
Shelly & Sharp!



Once the history has been collected an in-depth dental exam should be performed by a qualified dentist or veterinarian. The oral exam, from a nutritional perspective, should focus on evaluating the cheek teeth's occlusal (chewing) surface and enamel loss.

Enamel loss decreases the chewing surface area used to masticate hay. The term 'smooth mouth' describes teeth experiencing this process.

### Other common problems include:

- **Cupped teeth**—These occur when the upper cheek teeth's exposed crown wears below the occlusal surface (area of contact between teeth) and closer to the tooth roots but above the gums; this condition can also occur in lower cheek teeth.
- **Expired teeth**—Upper (Maxillary) or Lower (mandibular) cheek teeth at the end stage of wear, where the teeth are worn down to the cemental roots.



- This Intra-oral photo shows teeth belonging to a geriatric horse that can no longer safely eat hay due to dental wear.: Photo: Courtesy Dr. Caroline N. Niederman

### Nutritional Recommendations

Appropriate nutritional advice is not possible until all aspects of the clinical examination have been completed and this also includes observing the horse during eating times and looking at the overall picture.

For example, a thin geriatric horse could be seen standing all day out in a paddock with a round hay bale along with other younger and fatter horses, which may leave owners thinking that the horse is obviously getting enough. However that older horse's teeth may simply be unable to chew the hay as well and, thus, that horse can only stand aside as other horses feed, which of course will not help him to gain weight.

Another common scenario is where, despite eating plenty complete feed each day, the horse is still thin. Once other factors such as the

## Testimonials

Dear Equus

I just wanted to tell you that my horse Orio is looking great and working like a dream. He is certainly ready for the year. I can't tell you how happy I am with how he is looking and I know it's thanks to the great feed he is on.

Thank you so much



Maryke and Orio

wrong feed choice, digestive issues (such as ulcers), over work or stress have been ruled out, it may be useful to find out how long it is taking the horse to eat at each feeding. A good rule of thumb to use is that if an underweight horse takes longer than 45 minutes to finish each meal, the horse could be having issues with that food and switching to a more calorically dense feed could be warranted.

Understanding how horses' teeth erupt throughout their lives and common wear patterns could help to better understand how to feed your horse. For instance, when a horse's last three maxillary cheek teeth are all either cupped or expired, it is time to look for a long-stem hay alternative, especially if the horse doesn't have pasture access.

For senior horses with diminished chewing function (and assuming lab work has precluded health problems such as renal or hepatic dysfunction), the following diet could be useful: Chopped or soaked grass or grass/lucerne -mix hay cubes at a rate of 1 to 2% of body weight per day.

- A complete feed comprised of 12 to 14% crude protein, 8 to 20% crude fat, and 5 to 10% crude fibre; and
- If extra energy for work is needed, a cup of edible oil per day.

NB Please consult a nutritionist before starting such a diet to ensure it is a) necessary and b) covers all of your horse's needs.



## Take-Home Message

Routine oral examination and regular dentistry work (at least annually) presents an opportunity to become aware of age-related tooth wear and to discuss proactive dietary modifications.

Article taken and adapted from [www.thehorse.com/articles/35288/nutrition-as-a-component-of-equine-dental-care?utm\\_source=Newsletter&utm\\_medium=nutrition&utm\\_campaign=02-09-2015](http://www.thehorse.com/articles/35288/nutrition-as-a-component-of-equine-dental-care?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=nutrition&utm_campaign=02-09-2015)

# Fabulous Fibre

With several areas of the country experiencing drier than normal conditions, many horses living on pasture might soon have limited forage choices.

No matter the breed or intended use, all horses require fibre in their diets at an inclusion of at least 1.5% of body weight per day with an absolute minimum of 1% per day in extreme conditions. According to the National Research Council's *Nutrient Requirements of Horses (2007, 6th Edition)*, a large body of evidence suggests that insufficient dietary fibre can lead to several digestive issues (such as colic) and behavioral vices (such as cribbing) in horses. Horses' fibre needs are met most commonly by pasture and hay, but in times when less of these sources can be found horse owners must find alternative fibre sources. Some common alternatives include hay cubes, and fibre byproducts.

**Hay cubes such as Equus Nice n Easy or Equus Lucerne cubes are an excellent fibre source for horses.**

The two main benefits to using hay cubes as opposed to hay are:

- Hay cubes typically contain less dust than hay so horses are less subject to inhaling particles that could contribute to respiratory disease; and
- Offering hay cubes generally results in less wasted feed compared to hay.

If offered voluntarily, most horses will consume more hay cubes than hay, so owners should measure and monitor their horses' intake carefully. Hay cubes can be fed just like hay, at a 1:1 ratio of the like hay type the horse currently consumes. For example, if a horse consumes 1kg of Lucerne hay at each feeding, replace that with 1kg of lucerne cubes and adjust if needed to maintain the animal's proper weight. Hay cubes are heavier in weight, so need to be weighed to ensure the horse is getting the proper amount of forage.

**Byproduct fibre sources** include beet pulp, grain hulls, and chaffs. Beet pulp, produced by sugar beet processing, is a popular fibre source for horses because of its digestibility and palatability. Studies have shown that a horse's diet can contain up to 55% beet pulp without negative effects. It's important to remember, however, that beet pulp's digestibility is higher than most grass hays, so ensure the horse's diet is correctly balanced when making the switch or you could end up with too much weight gain. Soya hulls are also high-fibre, and are often provided in complete feeds such as those within the **Equus** range.

Chaffs are another good way of providing additional fibre in horses' everyday concentrate. Some chaffs can be coated in molasses to provide a shiny appearance so do bear this in mind when feeding horses that are overweight, prone to ulcers and those with laminitis and Insulin Resistance.

Do note that these options are by no means a full replacement for long stemmed fibre in the form of hay but can be used to supplement in order to preserve low stocks. Thus, these sources should be used to stretch hay rather than replace it.

Article adapted from <http://www.thehorse.com/articles/29567/alternative-fiber-sources-for-horses> written by Kirsten M Janicki.



Karen is a Protea Dressage rider and National Champion, who is highly regarded in her field. When Karen is not schooling her own horses, she spends a lot of time teaching up and coming riders at Kellandstables, as well as at their home yards.

In this new series, Karen will be sharing her schooling "top tips" to help you and your horse in your everyday riding.

### This month we look at how to get the best out of your corners.

"I always think of my corners as being a gymnastic exercise for the horse. For example you can use a perfect corner to set your horse up for the next movement. I like to break down a corner into three parts: The approach, the middle and the exit.

On the approach I take a half-halt and bring the horse more onto the haunches, then I flex my horse to the inside, while making sure my horse's quarters stay straight.

In the middle I use my inside leg like a pillar for the horse to bend around, taking care not to lose the outside shoulder or allow the horse's quarters to fall out, or in.

On the exit, my focus is on giving on the inside rein and straightening my horse onto the outside rein harnessing the power from the corner and using it as the set up for the next movement whether it be a shoulder-in, an extended canter or even a row of tempi changes.

Remember never to ride deeper into the corner than you can keep the rhythm and balance of your horse"

Happy Riding

---

## Contact Us

Office: 087 820 4580  
 Feeding Advice: 073 423 5491 / 083 998 6824  
 Email: info.equus@driehoek.co.za  
 tech.equus@driehoek.co.za

**For an absolutely free consultation with no further obligation contact our professional consultants to schedule a visit to your yard.**

Hannah - 073 423 5491  
 Helen - 083 998 6824  
 tech.equus@driehoek.co.za  
 helen@driehoek.co.za

