

Mind the gap!

Diastemata are abnormal gaps between horses' teeth within which food may get trapped (Fig 1). This can be a painful condition in which signs such as halitosis (bad breath), quidding (dropping food), weight loss, gingivitis and biting problems may be present. They may occur both between the incisors as well as between the cheek teeth.



Horses of all ages may get diastema between their teeth for a number of reasons. In younger horses insufficient angulation of the cheek teeth can cause gaps to form between the cheek teeth, these are developmental diastema. Older horses may acquire them with age as the teeth grow outwards. Horses have hypsodont teeth, i.e. they continue to erupt throughout their life. Because the teeth taper towards the root, as they erupt small gaps start to appear between adjacent teeth. These gaps that develop with age are called senile diastema.

Open vs closed diastema

Diastemata which are wide enough to allow food to pass freely through without getting trapped are called open; whereas diastema that are narrower towards the tooth surface and tend to trap food within them are called closed. Food which becomes trapped and impacted within the diastema eventually cause gingivitis (gum disease), food pocketing below the gum margin, and eventually infection of the tissues around the tooth which becomes very painful (Fig 2). Horses with this type of dental disease frequently drop food and may even lose weight.

What can we do about these gaps? Open diastema, which allow food to pass freely through often do not require further treatment however, closed diastema require widening with a burr (Fig 3; Fig 4). This is a non painful procedure and can be done under sedation. In severe cases, diastema may be widened and then filled with dental impression material (the same material your dentist uses for filling your teeth) in order to prevent further problems (Fig 5).

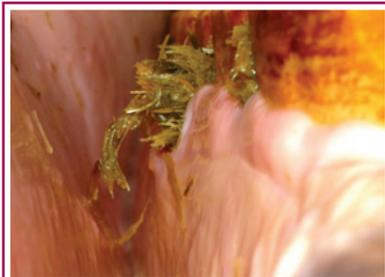


Fig 2.



Fig 3. Widening a diastema with a rotating burr



Fig 4. The mirror shows a widened diastema



Fig 5. The mirror shows a diastema filled with dental impression material that hardens to form a seal

Our veterinary surgeons



Jenny Clements
BVSc, MSc, Cert EIM, MRCVS



Eugenio Cillán-García
LV MRCVS



Louise Cornish
BVMS Cert EP MRCVS



Tess Fordham
BVMedSci BVM BVS MRCVS

Able assisted by our team of excellent hospital residents

Front office staff

Trish O'Donnell, Morven Kerr, Jo Anne Smith

THE ROYAL (DICK) SCHOOL OF VETERINARY STUDIES



THE DICK VET EQUINE PRACTICE

0131 650 6253 www.DickVetEquine.com

WINTER 2013

What's in this edition of the newsletter:

- Welcome and new staff
- Winter Client Evening
- Mud Fever
- Diastemata
- Our staff

CONTACT

The Dick Vet Equine Practice

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies
The University of Edinburgh
Easter Bush Campus
Midlothian
EH25 9RG
UK

tel: 0131 650 6253
out of hours tel: 01223 849 835
fax: 0131 650 8824
web: www.DickVetEquine.com
email: EQH@ed.ac.uk
facebook: [Facebook.com/DickVetEquine](https://www.facebook.com/DickVetEquine)
twitter: [Twitter.com/DickVetEquine](https://twitter.com/DickVetEquine)

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.



Now that the cold weather is properly upon us, welcome to our winter newsletter. We hope that you find the articles we've included topical and useful. Our new intern Tess, who some of you will have met, has written an article on mud fever, a perennial problem for many horse and ponies. Meanwhile Natalie Loh, who has been locuming for us, has written a piece on teeth diastemata, a topic which ties in with our Winter Client Evening (11th December) when Professor Paddy Dixon will be talking about equine dentistry. We hope that you will be able to join us for mince pies and mulled wine.

Most of you of course are aware that we have seen a period of staff changes through the late summer/autumn. We felt it important to take our time to appoint the right vets and we are really pleased to be able to announce our full team (see back page). Tess Fordham, who hails from a farming community in the Lake District of Cumbria, joined us in October as one of our junior vets. Tess qualified from the new Nottingham Vet School in 2011 and following some time as a volunteer for African Horse charities, gained a hard sought after internship at the Royal Vet College Hospital near London. She has a keen interest in Fell Ponies which her family keep and breed.

Louise Cornish is our final addition and will start with us in January as one of our senior vets. Louise is a native of Edinburgh who crossed the great divide to study at Glasgow Vet School, qualifying in 1998! Her early vet career involved mixed practice in Northern Ireland then equine practice in Australia, but for the past 11 years Louise has worked at Clyde Vets in Lanark where she has been one of the senior equine vets. She therefore has a wealth of experience in general equine practice, but specific interests include dentistry and reproduction work. Louise gained her Certificate in Equine Practice in 2007 and she is used to all types of problems in all types from the family pony to the competition level eventer. Louise also has an interest in charity work and is due to spend some time in The Gambia with the Horse and Donkey Trust. We hope you will welcome our new vets.

Free winter client evening

Join us at our winter client evening where Professor Paddy Dixon will be talking about equine dentistry.

Wednesday 11th December, 7pm onwards
At the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Come along and meet our new vets and enjoy some mince pies and refreshments from 7pm.

The event is free but please call Jo-Anne or Trish to let us know if you're coming.

tel: 0131 650 6253

Mud Fever: Greasy heels, cracked heels, pastern dermatitis, winter heels

What is mud fever?

Mud fever or 'Pastern Dermatitis' is not a single disease, it is a term used to describe a number of different diseases that all result in the clinical signs of pastern dermatitis.

Why does my horse get mud fever?

There are many predisposing factors which contribute to horses developing mud fever; some of these include;

- Genetics – horses with white hair on the lower legs or lots of feathering are more likely to develop mud fever.
- Infections – horses with underlying infections such as fungal infections, bacterial infections and mites (choriopic mange).
- Other diseases such as Cushings disease (PPID) are predisposing factors.
- Environment – legs being wet and muddy for prolonged periods.
- Irritants – chemicals applied to the skin or physical irritants such as over reach boots.

What are the signs?

Mud fever can occur anywhere on the body but is most commonly seen in the pastern region. Skin

becomes inflamed and red, oozing serum which forms scabs matting the hair together. Horses may resent you examining the area so be careful as even well behaved horses may behave unpredictably when in pain.

What happens if left untreated?

Mud fever can progress to serious bacterial/fungal skin infections, lameness, permanent leg swelling, open sores, wounds and loss of performance.

How do I treat it?

1. Decide whether there are any signs which suggest veterinary involvement is needed and call your vet if required.
2. Clip any excess feathering from the area being careful not to further traumatise the skin.
3. Gently wash off the scabs with very dilute chlorhexidine (e.g. 1 teaspoon of Hibiscrub per 1litre of cold water) and dry the leg thoroughly.
4. Apply a barrier cream such as baby's nappy cream or cow's udder cream.
5. Start prevention measures.

If treatment is not working your horse may have an underlying condition such as mites, Cushings disease(PPID) or a fungal/bacterial condition which requires veterinary treatment. When such signs occur in the summer months in dry conditions, this can signify other disease which may be aggravated by light exposure.

When should I call the vet?

You should call your vet if you observe any of the following signs;

- Your treatment is not working or the area is getting bigger.
- Swelling of the leg which doesn't reduce with exercise or is spreading up the leg.
- Lameness.
- Extreme pain when you touch the area.
- Wounds or opening sores.
- Bleeding or discharge.

How can I prevent it?

Prevention is probably the most important factor in the management of mud fever.

- Reduce time spent standing in wet muddy conditions – rotate paddocks, feed in different areas, put down hardcore at gateways and high traffic areas.
- Use barriers to mud once treatment has been started – creams, boots, leg wraps etc. can all help.
- Wash and DRY legs when bringing horses in from the field.
- Ensure turnout boots fit well, do not rub and clean them frequently.
- Practice good stable hygiene.

If you are at all concerned about your horse's skin, call us for a chat on 0131 650 6253.



Fig 1. Mud Fever is frequently restricted to the white areas of the legs.



Fig 2. Vet carrying out a skin scraping to ascertain the cause of mud fever.

