

MOUTH WOUNDS

Mouth wounds can look quite dramatic when they result in exposure of underlying tissue and possibly bone, loosening or loss of teeth, and bleeding. However, these wounds generally heal very well despite the initial severe appearance and number of bacteria in the mouth. For hygienic reasons, it is a good idea to wear rubber gloves when working in and around your horse's mouth.

Mouth wounds can occur as a result of biting problems. Your horse may have points and hooks on its teeth. The action of the big pulling the lips up against the upper molars can pinch and lacerate the lip if a point is present. The mixture of blood and saliva can make this problem look worse than it is.

Lacerations in the mouth can be caused by nails, wire or other objects protruding from fencing, stall walls or other areas in your horse's environment. Other common causes are hooks used for hanging buckets. These should be removed if not in use, or taped over.

A significant wound in the mouth/tongue area can heal remarkably well even if a large portion of the tongue is missing. Many internal mouth wounds are not sutured because suturing of mouth wounds is difficult and the suture line usually breaks down. Mouth wounds tend to heal well without suturing.

External muzzle wounds are treated medically and allowed to heal for 2-8 weeks. These external wounds are then rechecked to determine the need for any reconstructive surgery, which often turns out to be minimal.

Mouth abscesses can be caused by splinters or other irritating pieces of dried plant material eaten by your horse. The injured mouth can emit an unpleasant smell. Abscesses can drain into the mouth or open through the skin around the mouth.

The possibility of a foreign object, such as a stick or piece of wire, should be ruled out if your horse is not eating and has blood-tinged saliva. This condition may appear similar to choke (esophageal impaction).

Teeth may be loosened or lost in a variety of ways in a stall, paddock or pasture. Jaw fractures can occur in various ways. Horses often fracture their lower jaw by getting it stuck in a horseshoe latch and pulling back. Kicks from other horses may also cause a jaw fracture.