

Straight from the horse's mouth

Have you ever considered training to become an equine dentist? Experienced, qualified Equine Dental Technician Rachel Burton, from Beccles in Suffolk, explains the rigorous training required and discusses the various routes to qualification.

Dentistry is now very popular and, over the last two decades, horse owners have become aware of the need for routine dental treatment for their horses, increasing demand for qualified Equine Dental Technicians (EDTs). Rachel is passionate about the correct training and qualifications for EDTs and says: "I started out on my route to training some 18 years ago and, since then, the guidelines have actually changed quite significantly as the trade has expanded. I have met some amazing people and horses on my travels and my training began with a short training course, providing an introduction to dentistry in the UK. These short courses offer quick training, however, they do not provide enough training to fully equip you to be an EDT, and certainly not enough information to pass any qualifications. Unfortunately, some tooth rasps nowadays attend these intensive courses with little experience or knowledge of anatomy or horse handling. They are not qualified and usually do more harm than good, frequently have no insurance and almost certainly don't have a code of



Horse owners have become more aware of the need for routine dental treatment

conduct to adhere to. It is so frustrating now – with the powerful tool of social media, which makes advertising an easy option for these traders, it can be difficult to see who is qualified and who is not."

After starting her dental training, Rachel shadowed several EDTs and then travelled to the Worldwide Academy of Equine Dentistry in Idaho, USA. She says: "I gained my certification there, travelling backwards and forwards for a few years. These courses are fantastic and I owe a lot to the school over there." She then travelled all over the USA, gaining experience as she went. "I worked for a fabulous horse vet and EDT in the US. It was amazing working on everything from mules at the Grand Canyon, to circus zebras."

Even after her experience in the US, Rachel still required further training and experience in the UK, showing just how

rigorous the training procedure is. She shadowed various UK EDTs in order to reach the level required for her BEVA BVDA qualification, which she describes as "very intense." It was from here that she

"It was amazing working on everything from mules at the Grand Canyon, to circus zebras"

was allowed membership of the British Association of Equine Dental technicians. "I was a council member for four years until I handed the baton on," she explains, "and I support their campaign to lift the profile of good practice and dental training." ➤



It takes years of training to become a fully qualified EDT



It's a very rewarding job

Turning teacher

As she completely understands all the hard work that goes into training to be an EDT, Rachel is well placed for her latest role: that of teacher. She says: "I now have an apprentice and I also train and help on pre-exam training courses around the country." Being an Equine Dental Technician is certainly a varied job and Rachel is always busy across the East Anglian region. However, the job is also very rewarding and she explains: "People ask me if I like my job and I laugh and say 'no, I love my job'. I take real pride in providing a reliable, professional and friendly service.

"Dentistry also takes me to many exciting places. I have recently just returned from Norway, plus I have been to Germany, France, USA, Orkney and Shetland.

I also gained my international dental certificate, so I am qualified in the UK, the USA and internationally, however, I invariably spend most of my time driving around the Norfolk and Suffolk borders, with my jack russell and daschund."



Rachel and her trusty companions

Find out more about Rachel at www.bedt.co.uk

FOLLOWING THE PATH

The British Association of Equine Dental Technicians provides full guidelines for training.

To date, there have been several routes available to become an Equine Dental Technician, including: private apprenticeships; overseas training; and formal education



programmes in the UK. Since September 2014, Plumpton College has offered a degree course that is an excellent way to enter the profession. The course is made up of bespoke modules, including: Equine Cranial Anatomy and Physiology; Recording and Undertaking Equine Dental Practice; Lorinary and Cranial Conformation; and Professional Conduct for Equine Dentistry. Students will also undertake a final project which will enable them to research an area within

equine dentistry.

Tanya Betts from the BAEDT says: "There is also the option to train as an apprentice with a BEVA/BVDA qualified EDT, or veterinary surgeon. This would

be the training route the BAEDT would most recommend. This training has to be arranged between yourself and the qualified individual and is usually over a two or three-year period, with a view to sitting the BEVA/BVDA examination at the end of that time.

"The BAEDT strongly advise all EDTs to work towards the BEVA/BVDA exam, and doing so within the framework of an apprenticeship is by far the best way of achieving this goal."

Vet case notes: dental anatomy

Tom Hume, BVetMed MRCVS at Westover Veterinary Centre in Hainford, Norfolk, explains more about dental anatomy and provides a dental case study.

Horses have very interesting and unique mouths. The top jaw (maxilla) is wider than the bottom jaw (mandible) (Fig. 1) and the teeth continue to erupt throughout the horse's life. They have in-folding of the enamel at the occlusal (biting) surface, to enable a greater surface area with which to chew and break down the fibrous vegetation they are designed to eat. It is, therefore, a natural phenomenon that the buccal (cheek side) edge of the top teeth and the lingual (tongue side) edge of the bottom teeth will develop sharp areas known as sharp enamel points (SEPs). It is these SEPs that cause ulceration of the cheek or tongue, and this is what we remove when we give your horse a 'routine rasp'. The other common dental



Tom Hume with a happy patient