

Older Equine Care

Presented by: Ashley Best, Newton ANR Agent

Agenda

- ▶ Welcome
- ▶ Aging Gracefully
- ▶ Signs of Aging
- ▶ Weight
- ▶ Nutrition/ Hydration
- ▶ Metabolic Conditions
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Comfort Measures
- ▶ Conclusion
- ▶ Questions for ANR Agent



Objectives



After this presentation, you will be able to:

- ▶ List signs of aging in equine
- ▶ Distinguish between the different body condition scores
- ▶ Understand the importance of dental health
- ▶ Recognize nutritional needs for older equine
- ▶ Name metabolic conditions that affect older equine
- ▶ Describe comfort measures for the older equine



What are the ages of your horses? (one entry per horse)

§Text **NEWTONEXTENS679** once to **37607** to join our session.

[PollEv.com/newtonextens679](https://www.poll Everywhere.com/newtonextens679)

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Aging Gracefully

How old is senior?

➤ Chronological Age - 18-20 years

- Actual number of years

➤ Physiological Age

- Age at which functions begin to decline
 - Weight loss/ lameness/ reduced vigor
- “You’re only as old as you feel”

The population of the horse population is 20 years or older. Horses are living longer due to more resources for older equine.

Horse Age	Equivalent Human Age	Human Equivalent Change
0 (newborn)	2 years	
1 year	8 years	1st horse year = 6 human years
2 years	13 years	2nd horse year = 5 human years
3 years	17 years	3rd horse year = 4 human years
4 years	20 years	4th horse year = 3 human years
5 to 24 years	21 to 70 years	After 4th year, each horse year = 2.5 human years

Signs of Aging

- ▶ Appearance of gray hairs on the face, sometimes throughout the coat.
- ▶ Decreased elasticity of the skin.
- ▶ Decreased muscular strength and definition.
- ▶ Loss of elasticity in tendons and ligaments.
- ▶ Joint stiffness.
- ▶ Reduced digestive efficiency and increased risk of colic.
- ▶ Gum and dental disease.
- ▶ Reduced exercise tolerance and difficulty in conditioning.



Signs of Aging

- ▶ Reduced mental alertness and increased napping.
- ▶ Osteoporosis.
- ▶ Trouble maintaining weight.
- ▶ Reduced tolerance for extreme heat or cold.
- ▶ “Slowing down” – less interest in movement in general.
- ▶ Reduced resistance to infections and parasites.
- ▶ Development of vaccine reactions and allergies.



Weight Considerations

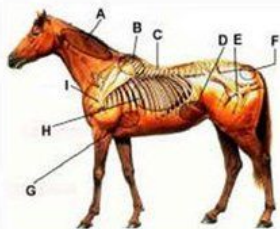
Older horses tend to lose muscle mass and replace it with fat deposits. This poses 2 major problems

- ▶ Extra weight is hard on the joints
- ▶ As they age, horses become insulin resistant and could potentially develop a condition like Type 2 Diabetes.

- ▶ 5-6 BCS (Body Condition Score)
- ▶ Monitor BCS other week



BODY CONDITION SCORING CHART



Areas of Emphasis for Body Condition Scoring

- A: Thickening of the neck
- B: Fat covering the withers
- C: Fat deposits along backbone
- D: Fat deposit on flanks
- E: Fat deposits on inner thigh
- F: Fat deposits around tailhead
- G: Fat deposit behind shoulder
- H: Fat covering ribs
- I: Shoulder blends into neck

1 Poor

Animal extremely emaciated; spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae, and tuber ischii projecting prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.

2 Very Thin

Animal emaciated; slight fat covering over base of spinous processes; transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded; spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae, and tuber ischii prominent; withers, shoulders, and neck structure faintly discernable.



3 Thin

Fat buildup about halfway on spinous processes; transverse processes cannot be felt; slight fat cover over ribs; spinous processes and ribs easily discernable; tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; tuber coxae appear rounded but easily discernable; tuber ischii not distinguishable; withers, shoulders, and neck accentuated.



4 Moderately Thin

Slight ridge along back; faint outline of ribs discernable; tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it; tuber coxae not discernable; withers, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin.



5 Moderate

Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spinous processes; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.



6 Moderately Fleshy

May have slight crease down back; fat over ribs fleshy/spongy; fat around tailhead soft; fat beginning to be deposited along sides of withers, behind shoulders, and along sides of neck.



7 Fleshy

May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tailhead soft; fat deposited along withers, behind shoulders, and along neck.



8 Fat

Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area along withers filled with fat; area behind shoulder filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs.



9 Extremely Fat

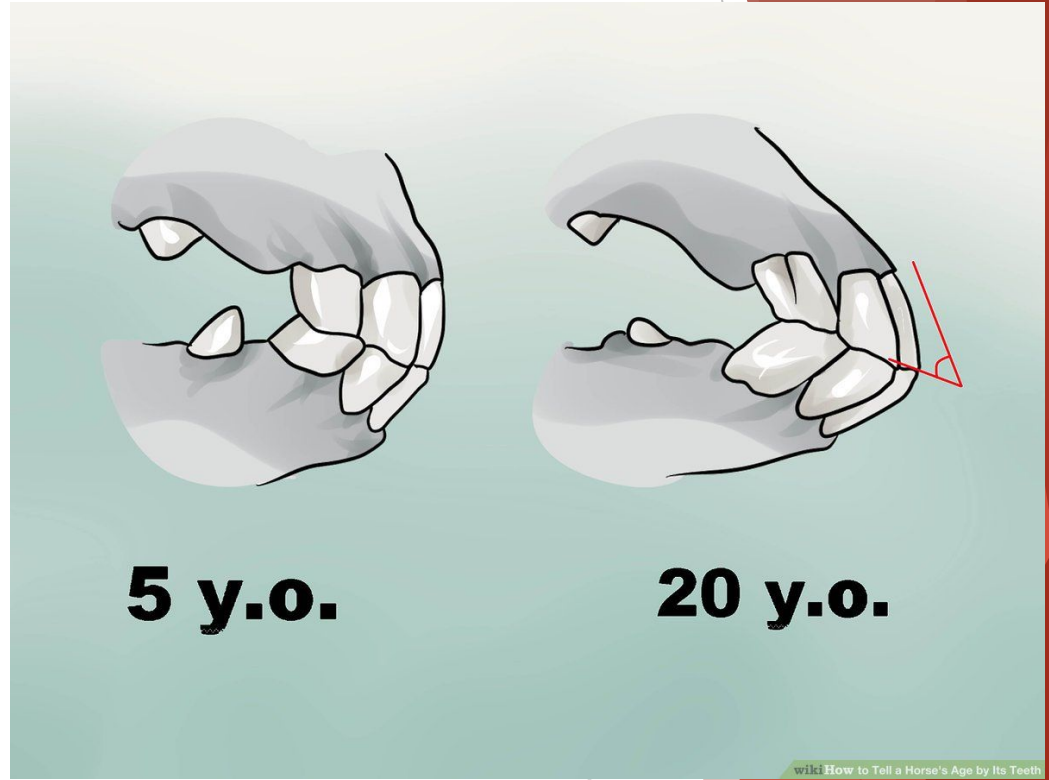
Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing.



Dental Health

- ▶ Acute Angle and longer teeth
- ▶ Worn enamel
- ▶ Sharp edges
- ▶ Loose teeth
- ▶ Tooth loss
- ▶ infections/ abscesses

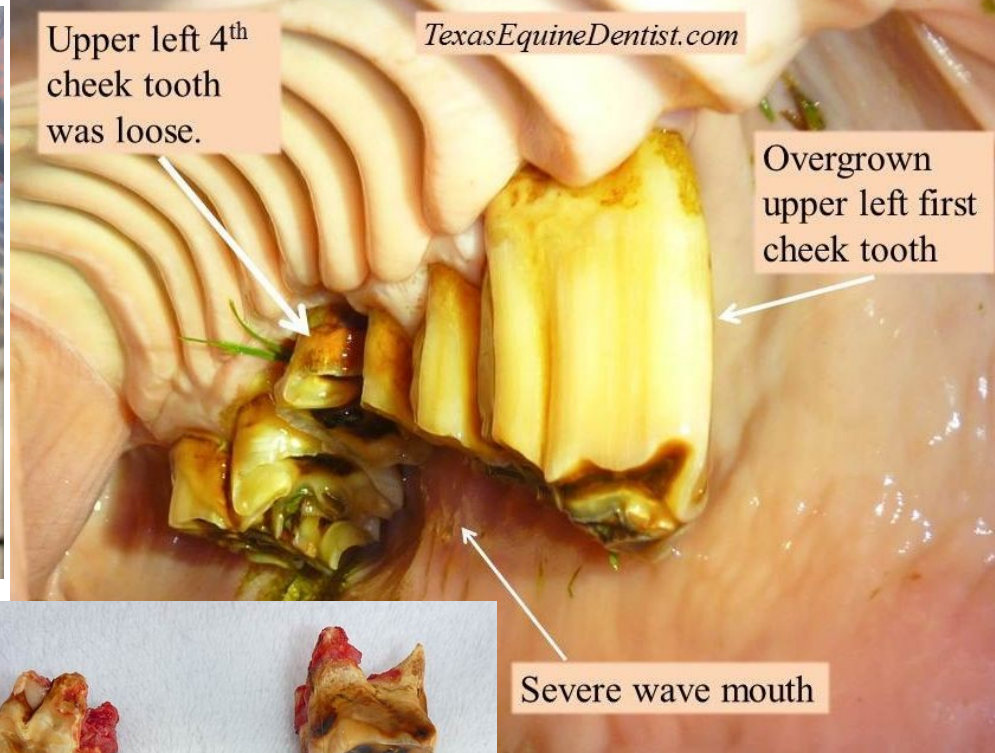
It is recommended to do a bi-annual exam by a veterinarian or a licensed equine dentist.





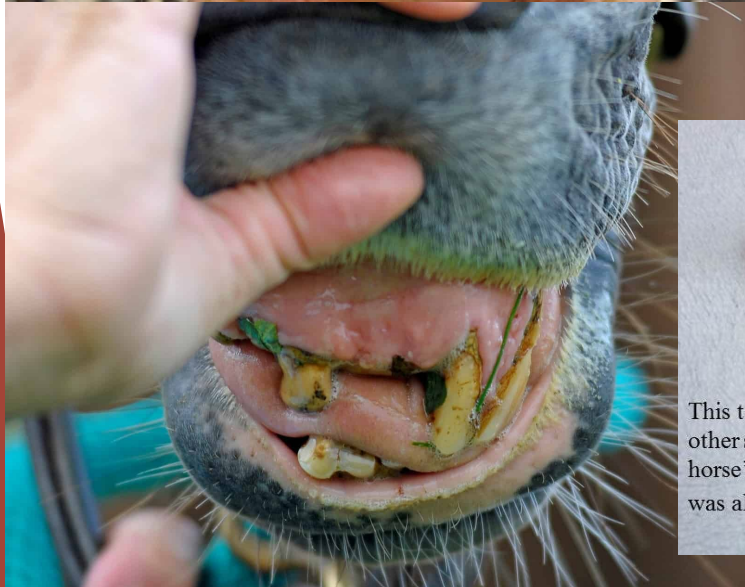
Upper left 4th
cheek tooth
was loose.

TexasEquineDentist.com



Overgrown
upper left first
cheek tooth

Severe wave mouth



This tooth was on
other side of the
horse's mouth and
was also loose.

This is the loose
tooth shown in
the previous
photo.

Signs of Dental Issues

Dropping Feed

Excessive salivation

Slow to eat

Quidding- Wads of chewed up feed

Choking

Bad Breath

Weight Loss



QUIDDING VS CHOKING

The background of the slide is composed of several overlapping geometric shapes. On the left, there are several teal-colored squares and rectangles of varying sizes, some of which are semi-transparent, creating a layered effect. On the right side, there are large, overlapping triangles in shades of red and orange. A white diagonal line runs from the top right towards the bottom left, separating the teal and red areas. The text 'QUIDDING VS CHOKING' is centered on the left side, overlaid on the teal shapes.

Nutrition

Feeding Considerations

- Energy
 - Carbs
 - Fat
- Fiber
- Protein
 - Quality (lysine)
 - Quantity
- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Water



https://www.polleverywhere.com/multiple_choice_polls/04lm6XXQEHEzA33iarhVp?preview=true&controls=none

Nutrition and Forages

Hay

- Dairy Quality Alfalfa is not necessary
- Good quality that has been harvested early
- Palatable and soft for the horse
- Feeding a mixed hay is widely accepted

Senior Feeds

- High Fiber
- Low starch and sugar
- Added fat
- Processed
- Can be a complete feed
- Wet mash
- Follow all feeding labels



Hydration

- ▶ Check the mouth for dryness on a regular basis
- ▶ Adult horses can drink between 5-10 gallons of fresh clean water each day
 - ▶ Dehydration is a common cause of impaction colic
- ▶ Water should always be:
 - ▶ An acceptable Temp
 - ▶ Fresh
 - ▶ Free choice



Older Equine Health Concerns

- Equine pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID, also known as Cushing's disease)
 - complex progressive disease of the pituitary gland
 - a long and curly hair coat
- Equine metabolic syndrome (EMS)
 - increased adiposity (fat deposits), insulin resistance, and a predisposition to laminitis
- Alert your vet if there is the slightest change in your older horse
 - drinking and urinating more often than normal
 - reluctance to walk or move forward
 - dropping feed while eating
 - weight loss or gain
 - shaggy or nonshedding hair coat
 - Lethargy
 - Coughing
 - a sudden drop in the pasture social food-chain





Exercise

- ▶ Maintain their topline
- ▶ Be concerned with the reduced circulating blood volume
- ▶ Less efficient to build muscle, increase cardiovascular output, and dissipating the heat
- ▶ Take multiple breaks
- ▶ Lunge first is a best practice



Sweet Stretching

Carrot stretches are another excellent way to help your senior horse stay limber. With a carrot piece as a lure, invite your horse to stretch gently in all directions. Use common sense, of course, and don't overdo it. Two to four repetitions of each stretch, ideally done both before and after workouts, is plenty. Also, give your horse time to build up to the maximum extension for each stretch—just as you wouldn't try to get all the way down to your toes on your first or second toe-touch.



Ask the Vet - Riding a horse with arthritis



Comfort Measures

- ▶ Turn out as much as possible
 - ▶ Anti-inflammatory drugs
 - ▶ Make sure stalls are bedded deeply
 - ▶ Glucosamine and Chondroitin
 - ▶ Joint Injections
-
- ▶ **Know the signs of declining quality of life.** Talk to your veterinarian about any changes you see and have a plan ready for when it's time for euthanasia. A horse that can't maintain good body condition or lie down and get up with ease is of concern.



Questions?

Give your local agent a call or contact me at abest22@uga.edu

https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201368_4.PDF

Closing

All resources will be stored on the Newton ANR Blog website.

<https://site.extension.uga.edu/newtonextanr/>