



## **Horse dentist - Jane Overton**

Cavin This is Cavin Shakesheave for Spotlight on Brittany, and today we're down near Carhaix to visit a rather charming lady who's into horse dentistry. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Jane Certainly, er good morning, my name is Jane Overton. I'm an Equine Dentist, otherwise known as an Equine Dental Technician and I travel round Brittany and Normandy taking care of the mouths of our equine friends.

Cavin Are there many people in the area with your skill?

Jane As far as I'm aware, not that many. There's certainly no other English Equine Dentists that are based in Brittany. There is one gentleman that comes over twice a year from the UK, um, and there are some French dentists but dentistry is still quite new in France. It tends to be done by the vets who are not over-keen on doing it.

Cavin Could you tell us what kind of problems that horses tend to have in the mouth?

Jane Uh, the main problems that the horses have is with sharp edges. A horse's mouth is designed to eat for approximately sixteen hours a day. They're constantly grinding, their teeth are constantly growing and then they're being ground down as they eat, but they don't grind the entire tooth and they end up with sharp edges which can cut into the cheeks and the tongue. They also have anatomical defects, they can lose teeth, they can get abscesses, very much the same sort of things that we as humans can get.

Cavin And how often would owners need your care? Is this something where they wait until there is a problem, or is it something they contact you regularly about?

Jane That depends. People are becoming more aware now of the need for good dental care in their horses. The average horse only needs to be seen for a routine check-up and floating, or rasping of their teeth to get rid of the sharp edges once every twelve months.

Cavin I've noticed, obviously that you're a very slightly-built lady. Can you tell us how you prevent yourself from getting bitten or kicked?

Jane Well, I wouldn't say that I was slightly built, but thank you for that. Regarding getting bitten, we do have an instrument called a gag or a mouth speculum, which enables me to have the horse's mouth held open so I can safely put my arm without losing it. Regarding getting kicked or barged around, it's a case of having 'horse sense'. You have to be able to, to handle horses, you have to be aware of what the horse is going to do before he does it and be able to get out of the way if necessary.

Cavin There's been lots of sayings in the English language like 'looking a gift horse in the mouth' or 'long in the tooth'. Can you tell from the mouth about the condition of the horse generally?

Jane You can tell a horse's age from the condition of its' teeth and that's where the saying.... well, both the sayings,.... 'Long in the tooth', as horses get older, their teeth, particularly the front teeth get much longer and also, 'never look a gift horse in the mouth', if somebody gives you a horse as a gift, don't go looking to see how old it is because, if it's free, just accept it and be grateful for it. Uh, regarding the condition of a horse, I can look at a horse's condition before I open its' mouth and often tell what state its' teeth are going to be in, because if a horse's teeth are not in good condition they can't eat properly and they tend to lose weight.

Cavin Can we also ask you, do you ride yourself or keep horses yourself Jane?

Jane I've got four of my own, well, two horses, a Shetland pony and a donkey. I very rarely have time to ride my own horses, with work and family commitments, but I do have the pleasure of riding with a lot of my clients.

Cavin There's got to be young people and especially young girls maybe interested in this occupation as a long-term career. Can you give us some idea how long does it take to become qualified and how they might actually take it up?

Jane Qualifying is a bit of a loose term where dentistry is concerned because it is actually a job that a lay person can do without breaking any laws, however, I wouldn't recommend that anybody started rasping a horse's teeth without some form of training. Um, there are various courses available. The main ones tend to be in the States or in Australia and they tend to be residential. However, it is possible to do more of an apprenticeship type training which is what I did in the UK where you are residential for a few weeks learning the theory and then you carry on after that as an apprentice with that dentist learning on the job. So there are various avenues, there are ways to train in France as well but I'm not fully versed on what they are.

Cavin The other thing that I'd like to ask you, Jane, If we was to come round and take you off on a date to a horse racing meeting, could you actually look in the, in the paddock and tell us which one's likely to win?

Jane Unfortunately I don't think you'll be taking me on that date because, no, I can't pick a winner from looking at its' smile. Sorry.

Cavin Jane, we thank you very much for inviting us into your home and looking round. This is Spotlight on Brittany. If you've been interested in any of the topics that we've discussed could you contact us on [www.spotlightonbrittany.fr](http://www.spotlightonbrittany.fr) This has been Cavin Shakesheave