



THE COLLEGE OF
VETERINARIANS
OF ONTARIO

INFO SHEET

Equine Dentistry in Ontario

INTRODUCTION

The definition of the practice of veterinary medicine in the Veterinarians Act states that “*the practice of veterinary medicine includes the practice of dentistry*” and this has been supported by the Ontario court system in numerous rulings. However the misconception that “equine dentists” or “equine dental technicians” can practice independently (without a veterinary licence or supervision) continues to persist in the public and media perceptions. This INFO SHEET is aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities the CVO, veterinarians and auxiliaries of veterinarians to patients and clients when it comes to the practice of equine dentistry.

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College of Veterinarians of Ontario
2106 Gordon Street
Guelph, Ontario
N1L 1G6

Phone: 519-824-5600 / 1-800-424-2856
Fax: 519-824-6497 / 1-888-662-9479
Website: www.cvo.org

The College of Veterinarians does not recognize equine dentist, equine dental technician, or any similar titles, since these lay individuals do not have the education or qualifications to obtain a licence to practice veterinary medicine in the province. It is unlawful for anyone who is not a licensed veterinarian to use a term, title or description that may lead a member of the public to believe that the individual can engage in the practice of veterinary medicine.

Protecting the patient

Each aspect of the practice of veterinary medicine encompasses a myriad of skills and procedures. In the case of equine dentistry, the performance of the procedure goes far beyond the simple mechanics of floating the teeth. Examination, diagnosis, and treatment all involve a level of understanding of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology that is achieved through the study of veterinary medicine. If complications were to occur following a dentistry procedure, a lay individual would not have the necessary drugs, equipment or training to be able to properly deal with these. If a qualified veterinarian is not available for immediate intervention, the animal is put at great risk. There is also very little recourse for the public if a procedure is performed improperly, inadequately, or in an unsafe or inhumane manner.

The role and limitations of auxiliaries

An auxiliary is a person employed by a veterinarian. Veterinarians have the right to direct suitably qualified auxiliaries to perform certain procedures. However, the veterinarian remains accountable to the CVO for the direct supervision, suitability and quality of the auxiliary's performance. The veterinarian must

remain on the same premises in order to supervise the auxiliary properly. The veterinarian is responsible for conducting the examination of the animal, developing a diagnosis and treatment plan, directing the auxiliary to perform a procedure which is within the auxiliary's abilities and re-examining the animal to ensure that the procedure was performed properly by the auxiliary.

Advertising issues

Veterinarians may advertise the fact that equine dentistry is offered through their veterinary facility, but they cannot promote auxiliary staff as "equine dental technicians." It is professional misconduct for a veterinarian to directly, or by implication represent any person to be a veterinarian, who is not a veterinarian.

Client referral

If a horse owner's veterinarian does not provide equine dental services, the horse owner will need to find another veterinarian who does. The horse owner can either do this himself, or ask for a referral from their veterinarian. A responsible, caring animal owner should have no reason to turn to an unlicensed individual for veterinary procedures.

Protecting the public

The CVO is mandated by the provincial government to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine in the public interest. The protection of animal welfare is included in that public interest and is a hallmark of veterinary ethics. It is the CVO's responsibility to ensure that equine dentistry is delivered with the highest standards and accountability.
