

## **NEW JERSEY VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING EQUINE DENTISTRY**

The New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association (NJVMA) is dedicated to protecting the health and well being of animals within the state of New Jersey and is committed to advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine. With this in mind, NJVMA adopts the following position regarding the practice of equine dentistry:

The practice of equine dentistry is an integral part of the practice of veterinary medicine as defined by N.J.S.A. 45:16-1 et seq. This statute, known as the New Jersey Veterinary Practice Act, defines the practice of veterinary medicine as "Any person shall be regarded as practicing veterinary medicine within the meaning of this chapter, who, either directly or indirectly, diagnoses, prognoses, treats, administers, prescribes, operates on, manipulates, or applies any apparatus or appliance for any disease, pain, deformity, defect, injury, wound or physical condition of any animal, including poultry and fish, or who prevents or tests for the presence of any disease in animals, or who performs embryo transfers and related reproductive techniques, or who holds himself out as being able or legally authorized to do so". Section 45:16-1 specifically addresses dentistry as follows "The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, hereinafter in this chapter designated as the "board," created and established by an act entitled "An act to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine, surgery and dentistry in the State of New Jersey, to license veterinarians and to punish persons violating the provisions thereof". Just as treatment of dental diseases and deformities in humans should be performed by a licensed dentist or oral surgeon, treatment of dental diseases and deformities in horses should be performed by a licensed veterinarian.

The practice of "equine dentistry" by unlicensed persons has become more widespread over the past few years. In some states, state authorities have initiated enforcement actions to cease the unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine by these individuals. As a result, courts in other states have concluded that equine dentistry is within the practice of veterinary medicine. For instance, the Nebraska Veterinary Practice Act states, as does the New Jersey Practice Act, that veterinary medicine includes the practice of veterinary dentistry. The Supreme Court of Nebraska found that a person who diagnosed possible problems with and changes in the condition of a horse's mouth and treated, corrected and relieved defects, deformities, injuries or other physical conditions was engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine and had to be licensed as a veterinarian.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners states that equine dentistry includes the following: "Any surgical procedure of the head or oral cavity; the administration or prescription of sedatives, tranquilizers, analgesics or anesthetics; procedures which are invasive of the tissues to the oral cavity including, but not limited to, removal of sharp enamel projections, treatment of malocclusions of premolars, molars, and incisors, reshaping of canine teeth, the extraction of first premolars and deciduous premolars and incisors; treatment, extraction or repair of damaged or diseased teeth; periodontal treatment; and dental radiography are veterinary medical procedures and should be performed by a licensed veterinarian." NJVMA agrees with this statement.

This is consistent with NJVMA's position that a licensed veterinarian must be clinically responsible for dental services provided to horses and have a veterinarian/client relationship established.

NJVMA believes that the use of the designation "equine dentist" or any letters following a person's name such as "Eq. DT", would lead the public to believe that a person had veterinary training in the area of equine dentistry. This violates the New Jersey Veterinary Practice Act by misleading the public as to induce the belief that the person using them is engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine. Therefore, any person who is not licensed as a veterinarian but uses the designation "equine dentist" or the letters "Eq.DT" after his or her name is practicing veterinary medicine without a license.