

Current Regulations on Equine Dental Procedures

Many procedures involving equine teeth come largely within the Veterinary surgeons Act although some minor procedure have been deemed suitable to be performed by suitably trained technicians, or are outwith this Act. The consensus of appropriate delegation has been agreed by all parties since 2009 and been circulated widely in the veterinary and Equine press. Despite this there appears to some misunderstanding regarding the legality if equine dental procedures by horse owners, veterinary surgeons and equine dental technicians (EDTs). The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), the British Veterinary Dental Association (BVDA), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT) wish to clarify the current situation for all concerned once again.

At present *all diagnostic and treatment* procedures in the horse's mouth are considered to be *Acts of Veterinary Surgery* under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, which is regulated by the RCVS. The only exception that is considered to be outwith the Act is the manual removal of small dental overgrowths and sharp enamel points with hand instruments. This is also the case for all other body systems involving sensitive vital tissues except those digital tissues that are regulated by Farriers Act 1975. These laws are designed to protect animals (including equidae) against mutilation by inappropriately qualified individuals and to regulate the behaviour of Veterinary surgeons and Farriers in order to maintain ethical and professional standards.

However, despite no current legal basis for non-veterinarians to perform acts of veterinary surgery, RCVS with the assistance of recommendation agreed by BEVA and BAEDT evolved a grading system of procedures that describes which procedures which could be safely delegated to suitably qualified equine dental technicians (i.e. those BAEDT members who have passed the BEVA/BVDA examination) without compromising the horse's welfare and safety. The RCVS indicated that there is no public interest in prosecuting veterinary surgeons collaborating with accredited and qualified EDTs to perform non-invasive procedures (**categories 1 and 2 only**) provided certain conditions are met. As such category 2 procedures have a so-called "amnesty" for qualified EDTs but are not permissible by lay-persons. **Category 3 procedures include all those involving vascular or innervated tissue (which are clearly invasive procedures) and consequently are restricted to qualified veterinary surgeons ONLY and are ILLEGAL for anyone else to perform.** A full list of the categories is below. These were also agreed by Lantra in 2012 to be the basis of NVS training standards for the future. http://www.beva.org.uk/_uploads/documents/1equine-dental-procedures-no-date.pdf.

However, it is important to note that currently category 2 procedures are still acts of veterinary surgery until any future exemption order or legislative reform. This has important ramifications since according to the category 2 list "the removal of erupted, non-displaced wolf teeth in the upper or lower jaw must be *under direct and continuous veterinary supervision*" i.e. the veterinary surgeon must be present to supervise the entire procedure. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences for all parties concerned. Furthermore, removal of any non-erupted or displaced ("blind/unerupted/oblique") wolf teeth remain as a category 3 procedure, since incision into vital tissue to expose the tooth is clearly an act of invasive surgery. Should a non-veterinarian carry out a category 3 procedure (which is not legal), even if under the direction of or assisting a veterinary surgeon (and this includes the veterinary surgeon incising over the non-erupted tooth) then the veterinary surgeon, EDT and owner of the horse are ALL liable for potential prosecution or disciplinary action, should unforeseen complications occur.

It is also imperative to note that it is illegal for anyone other than a veterinary surgeon to dispense, supply or stock prescription only drugs (This includes Sedalin™ gel, Domosedan Gel™ or phenylbutazone). If a non-veterinary surgeon is caught with these drugs in their possession then they are liable to prosecution by the VMD who have been active in investigating such incidents in the last 12 months

SUMMARY

- Only category 1 procedures currently legal
- Category 2 procedures have amnesty for qualified and accredited EDTs (check first!)
- Category 3 procedures **only** by qualified veterinary surgeons – includes diastemata widening and unerrupted wolf tooth removal
- Erupted and non-displaced wolf tooth removal under **direct & constant supervision by qualified veterinary surgeon**
- Only qualified veterinary surgeons can dispense POMs and only vet/owner can then

Categorisation of Equine Dental procedures from Lantra template 2012

Equine Dental Procedures for suitably trained/qualified EDTs

June 2009 (agreed by RCVS/BEVA/BAEDT/ BVDA)

Category 1 Procedures

Those procedures which an individual can perform after recognised training without specific attainment of qualifications.

- Examination of teeth;
- Removal of sharp enamel points using manual rasps only;
- Removal of small dental overgrowths (maximum 4mm reductions) using manual rasps only;
- Rostral profiling of the first cheek teeth (maximum 4mm reductions), previously termed 'bit seat shaping';
- Removal of loose deciduous caps; and
- Removal of supragingival calculus.

Category 2 Procedures

Additional procedures suitable for delegation to an EDT who has trained and passed an examination approved by DEFRA:

- Examination, evaluation and recording of dental abnormalities;
- The removal of loose teeth or dental fragments with negligible periodontal attachments
- The removal of erupted, non-displaced wolf teeth in the upper or lower jaw under direct and continuous veterinary supervision;
- Palliative rasping of fractured and adjacent teeth; and
- The use of motorised dental instruments where these are used to reduce overgrowths and remove sharp enamel points only. Horses should be sedated unless it is deemed safe to undertake any proposed procedure without sedation, with full informed consent of the owner.

Category 3 procedures.

All other procedures (involving diagnosis or treatment of animals) and any new procedures, which arise as a result of scientific and technical development, would by default fall into category 3, which are those procedures restricted to qualified veterinary surgeons and are not proposed for deregulation. It is therefore NOT legal for these to be performed by non-veterinarians.

New, non-invasive procedures could be reviewed after a trial period and if deemed of low risk to animals could be considered for inclusion in category 2