



College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

FAQ: Equine Dental Services

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The CVBC would like to address some frequently asked questions about equine dental services.

I have seen services offered by “equine dental practitioners” and “equine dentists”. Are these people veterinarians? How can I determine if they are qualified to perform the services they offer?

Search our website for veterinarians registered with the CVBC. If you do not find a person’s name on our register, you may assume that the person is not a registered veterinarian. The CVBC is unable to assist with determining the qualifications of persons who are not registered veterinarians. There are many claims of programs offering certification for equine dentistry. If you take the time to research it, you may be surprised by what you learn.

Should my vet be overseeing dental work done by someone who is not a registered veterinarian?

It is the CVBC’s view that only registered veterinarians are authorized by the *Veterinarians Act*, S.B.C. 2010, Ch. 15, to practice veterinary medicine and dentistry. There are certain procedures which a registered veterinarian may delegate to others, but the veterinarian is required to maintain adequate supervision over the delegate.

If my vet is not doing the dental work directly, what specifically should my vet do before or during a dental procedure done by someone else?

Your vet should be performing a pre-dental procedure exam of your horse, and make note the examination results in a medical record. The purpose is to check the general health of the horse and to determine what procedures are appropriate.

What types of equine dental work are part of the practice of veterinary medicine and dentistry?

The CVBC considers the following dental procedures to be part of the practice of veterinary medicine: examining, diagnosing and recommending dental treatment, grinding (floating) teeth, removing teeth, cutting teeth, administering sedatives to assist with any of the procedures.

Which dental procedures can be delegated by a supervising veterinarian?

The CVBC Bylaws stipulate 3 levels of supervision, depending on the procedure the vet delegates:

1. **Direct personal supervision** requires the vet to be close enough to be able to see, hear and direct the non-vet, so that the vet can competently intervene if necessary. The following dental procedures can be done under direct personal supervision: dental cleaning, dental disease prevention, and dental extractions not requiring surgical intervention.
2. **Direct supervision** requires the vet to be close enough to be consulted by the non-vet performing the treatment and be able to competently intervene if necessary. Dental procedures other than dental surgery and the procedures requiring direct personal supervision can be done under direct supervision.
3. **Indirect supervision** means the vet has given either oral or written instruction to the non-vet after the vet has performed the pre-procedure examination leading to those instructions. Procedures such as radiographs, non-invasive collection of lab specimen, certain diagnostic procedures, administering of certain medication and insertion of intravenous catheters fall into this category.

What happens if something goes wrong during a dental procedure performed by a non-veterinarian?

If the vet is on location and supervising, the vet can step in, make an assessment and start treatment. If the veterinarian is not nearby, the outcome becomes less predictable.

What are the consequences of a veterinarian not being available to step in if complications result from a dental procedure done by a non-veterinarian?

The animal could suffer injury. The non-vet or the vet could be injured assisting the animal. The animal's owner could suffer financial loss. If the animal's injury would ordinarily be covered by insurance had the procedure had been performed by a vet, it may not be insured if done by a non-vet. If the animal's owner thought the vet would be on location or performing the procedure him or herself, there could be negative discipline or liability consequences to the veterinarian. Personal injury could be covered by insurance or may require court action to redress.