



Equine Dentistry

Position statement

The NZVA Te Pae Kīrehe believes that all dental procedures on horses and all equidae should be performed by veterinarians and be based on sound scientific knowledge, evidence-based medicine and surgery, and best-practice standards.

Background

While the NZVA's position is that all dental procedures should be undertaken by a veterinarian, the association acknowledges that New Zealand's current regulatory environment does not preclude equine dental technicians (EDTs) undertaking equine dental work.

In New Zealand, there is no regulation of people providing equine dentistry services, except when that person is a veterinarian, who is bound by the Veterinary Council of New Zealand's Code of Professional Conduct. Currently, equine dental procedures can be performed by unregulated EDTs with varying levels of training and/or experience. There is no governing body in New Zealand that regulates the training, qualification, or accreditation of EDTs. Judgement of non-veterinarians (EDTs) competency is at the discretion of the supervising/training/authorising veterinarian.

From 9 May 2021, section 16 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999, provides the criteria for the definition of a significant surgical procedure (SSP). While wolf tooth extraction meets the criteria of an SSP from May 9th, 2021, regulation 56E of the Animal Welfare Act (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018, allows a legal, although potentially beyond the capability of, pathway for the removal of wolf teeth by "competent" persons, provided that "Appropriate pain relief, authorized by a veterinarian, must be given to the horse at the time of the procedure to remove the wolf tooth". Other than wolf tooth extraction, all other equine dental extractions are SSPs and can only be performed by veterinarians.

Where equine dental procedures are performed by EDTs in the absence of veterinary supervision, the NZVA believes these procedures should be restricted to uncomplicated tooth floating/rasping.

Guidelines

Equine oral health care includes, where necessary, the provision of appropriate and skilled equine dentistry procedures. Equine dental procedures require the appropriate use of sedatives, anaesthetic agents, pain management pharmaceuticals, antimicrobials, and other pharmaceuticals to permit proper examination, maximise the comfort and safety of the horse and operator and ensure the successful outcome of the procedure. A comprehensive knowledge of the aetiology of dental disease is necessary to properly communicate the prognosis and preventative procedures to clients.

The NZVA acknowledges the importance of the Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) as a necessary component of the communication process to help define client expectations and ensure the success of any dental examination and procedures.

The NZVA has produced a **Guideline / Equine Dentistry** that provides background and context to this Position Statement, in relation to Equine Dentistry. The NZVA's **Equine Dentistry Procedures List (Appendix 1)** provides guidelines for which procedures can be performed by EDTs (with or without direct and continuous veterinary supervision).



The NZVA **Position Statement Working with Non-Veterinarians** sets out expectations where veterinarians enable non-veterinarians to undertake procedures on animals, via authorising use of restricted veterinary medicines and ensuring those people are competent so there are acceptable welfare outcomes for those animals.

References:

1. College of Veterinarians of British Columbia – Veterinarians Act, 2010.
2. American Association of Equine Practitioners – AAEP Policy Statement on Equine Dentistry 2012
3. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association – CVMA Veterinary Dentistry Policy Statement, July 29, 2011
4. New Zealand Animal Welfare Act 1999- Section 16 Surgical Procedures
5. New Zealand Animal Welfare Act 1999 – Regulation 56E of the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018
6. Royal College of Veterinary Scientists – Veterinarians Act 1966, Acts of Veterinary Surgery
7. Australian Veterinary Association – Policy Statement Equine Dentistry 2008

Name	Approved by Board	Next Review Date <i>Unless circumstances require a lesser period</i>	Public
Equine Dentistry Position Statement	September 2024	September 2026	Yes