



Equine Dentistry in Virginia: Rules and Facts All Horse Owners Should Know!

Effective in November of 2007, there were changes in the laws and regulations governing equine dentistry in the state of Virginia. These changes were created to protect our horses. Be informed to be a good horse owner!

What Changed?

A registry has been created for Equine Dental Technicians (EDT's). From this time on they will be regulated by the Virginia State Board of Veterinary Medicine under the Department of Health Professions. This means that legally the only people who can do any dental work on horses in Virginia are licensed veterinarians and registered EDT's.

What is an EDT? I have always hired a horse dentist, isn't that better?

An equine dental technician is anyone other than a veterinarian, doing equine dental work. While sometimes called "dentists," EDT is really a more correct designation. Becoming an EDT requires hard work and specialized knowledge, and it is generally accomplished with trade school programs &/or apprenticeship. Now, it is also necessary for EDT's to submit proof of training and experience to the state to register. EDT's will need to participate in continuing education to maintain registration.

What exactly can EDT's do in Virginia?

A registered EDT may *hand float unsedated* horses independently. They may extract unrooted teeth (deciduous caps and geriatric molars that no longer have roots). They may do extractions of rooted teeth (including wolf teeth) or use power tools *only under the supervision of a veterinarian*. EDT's may *not* make medical diagnoses. EDT's may *not* prescribe or administer medications, including sedation or tranquilization, antibiotics, and pain medications.

What is the Veterinarian's role?

Your veterinarian is able to either fully care for your horses' teeth or to collaborate with your registered EDT. If you choose an EDT and your horse requires sedation/tranquilization for dental work, your veterinarian and EDT will have to collaborate to do the job. Collaboration is also needed for invasive procedures that require pain control, or in cases with infection or underlying illness. Some veterinarians prefer to only do dental work themselves and will refuse to collaborate with EDT's, some veterinarians will not do any dental work themselves and prefer to collaborate with EDT's. However, most veterinarians fall somewhere in the middle and will do some dental work themselves, and some in collaboration with EDT's. Ask questions of the professionals you wish to use so you can decide which route to take for your horses! It is now illegal for

veterinarians to collaborate with an unregistered EDT--so you cannot expect a veterinarian to collaborate with anyone who is not registered with the Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine.

How do I know if a particular EDT is registered?

Ask to see proof of registration, or go to the State Board of Veterinary Medicine web site and check for yourself.

What do I tell an unregistered EDT?

Suggest to them that they contact the Department of Health Professions or VEDTA for information on how to get registered. You should NOT allow an unregistered EDT to work on your horse, since working with an unregistered EDT is illegal.

Why was this registration requirement created?

In most states it is illegal for anyone other than a veterinarian to do any kind of equine dentistry. This creates a situation of underground dental technicians working illegally. In Virginia the EDT's were working in a legal gray zone, and found it a very uncomfortable situation. A group of very professional EDT's formed the Virginia Equine Dental Technician's Association (VEDTA). This group approached Virginia Delegate Ed Scott of Culpeper and began the work on this important new law. The Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, and Virginia Association of Equine Practitioners collaborated with Del. Scott and VEDTA in creating this new legal recognition of EDT's. With registration comes accountability, the State Board of Veterinary Medicine can take action against any EDT who acts outside the law.

If you have a chance to, please be sure to thank Delegate Scott for his hard work on this issue.

An historic first!

This legislation is an important first in our nation. Not only is Virginia the first state to recognize and register EDT's instead of banning them, but Virginia is the first state to have a cooperative group of horsemen, veterinarians and EDT's work together to create a solution that puts the interests of the horse first! As with many firsts, you will find that this law is controversial among veterinarians and EDT's alike. There will undoubtedly be growing pains that are normal with any change, but VEDTA, VVMA, and VAEP are all very confident that the basics of this solution will stand the test of time!

For more information:

Board of Veterinary Medicine: <http://www.dhp.state.va.us/vet/default.htm>

Virginia Association of Equine Practitioners: <http://www.vaep.net/index.php>

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