



# Damascus Equine Associates

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## Equine Dentistry

Equine dentistry has and will likely continue to be a contentious issue. There are veterinarians who specialize in dentistry, and veterinarians who would prefer not to do any dentistry (the same applies to other areas of specialization). The majority fall somewhere in between those two positions and are happy to provide dental care but are also willing to work with responsible equine dental technicians. Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont allow some provision for non-veterinarians to provide routine dental care for horses. In the other states, any dentistry is considered the practice of veterinary medicine. Equine dental technicians are sometimes called equine dentists. This is incorrect because it implies a medical degree equivalent to a human dentist; however it has become so ingrained in the culture that its informal use would be hard to eliminate.

This is the applicable area of the Maryland Code as it applies to equine dentistry. This has been the rule for at least the last 25 years and is more liberal in its specific exclusion of routine floating from the "practice of veterinary medicine" than the majority of other states. Note that a dental technician sedating a horse for dental procedures is prohibited here as well as in federal statutes and that anyone, other than a veterinarian, who refers to him or herself as "Doctor" in reference to treating animals is clearly in violation of the statute.

§2-313.

### ***A person may not:***

#### ***(1) Practice veterinary medicine unless he is licensed, registered, and authorized to engage in the practice under the provisions of this subtitle;***

(f) "Practice of veterinary medicine" includes, but is not limited to, the practice by any person who:

(1) Diagnoses, advises, prescribes, or administers a drug, medicine, biological product, appliance, application, or treatment of any nature, for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease of an animal;

(2) Performs a surgical operation, including cosmetic surgery, upon any animal;

#### ***(3) Performs dentistry on any animal;***

(4) Performs any manual procedure upon an animal for the diagnosis or treatment of sterility or infertility of the animal;

(5) Represents himself as engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine;

(6) Offers, undertakes, or holds himself out as being able to diagnose, treat, operate, vaccinate, or prescribe for any animal disease, pain, injury, deformity, or physical condition; or

(7) Uses any words, letters, or titles in connection or under circumstances as to induce the belief that the person using them is engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine. This use is prima facie evidence of the intention to represent himself as engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine.

#### ***(g) The term "practice of veterinary medicine" does not include or apply to:***

- (1) Any person practicing veterinary medicine in the performance of civil or military official duties in the service of the United States or of the State;
- (2) Experimentation and scientific research of biological chemists or technicians engaged in the study and development of methods and techniques, directly or indirectly related or applicable to the problems of the practice of veterinary medicine;
- (3) A person who advises with respect to or performs acts which the Board, by rule or regulation, has prescribed as accepted management practices in connection with livestock production;
- (4) A physician licensed to practice medicine in the State or to his assistant while engaged in educational research;
- (5) A person administering to the ills and injuries of his own animals if they otherwise comply with all laws, rules and regulations relative to the use of medicines and biologics;
- (6) A farrier or a person actively engaged in the art or profession of horseshoeing as long as his actions are limited to the art of horseshoeing only;
- (7) Any nurse, attendant, technician, intern, or other employee of a licensed and registered veterinarian when administering medication or rendering auxiliary or supporting assistance under the responsible direct supervision of a licensed and registered veterinarian;

***(8) A person who floats (files) equine teeth or removes caps;***

Changing these regulations may be possible but is a long process and should be addressed by all interested parties.

Great Britain and several states including Virginia have changed their practice act to allow for the registration of equine dental technicians by a regulatory agency or the State Board of Veterinary Examiners. This provides a degree of accountability for the consumer and assures a minimal level of expertise in the practice of routine dental care.

The International Association of Equine Dentistry is a group of dental technicians and veterinarians. Persons advertising membership in this organization do not possess any special qualifications or skills; persons who are certified by the IAED have passed a rigorous examination. This is the only group at this point whose certification is recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia and state of Minnesota for registration. This is their web site; <http://iaedonline.com>. Please reference their code of conduct.

If an equine dental technician sedates your horse he or she is in violation of the law. If they perform a painful procedure without sedation or local anesthesia, they are in conflict with basic tenets of humane treatment of animals.