

HORSE OWNER BEWARE

Equine Dentistry is becoming a popular topic recently in the horse world. Along with the demand for the service comes a battle among two groups to provide the service, Certified Equine Dentists (CEDs) and Doctors of Veterinary Medicine (DVMs). In recent months there has been several articles in regional and national magazines, some representing both sides and some written by DVMs, who used negative titles for CEDs such as "outlaws".

First, a general history of equine dentistry. Ancient Chinese history reveals equine dental tools which tells us equine dentistry has been around since the earliest use of the horse. The U.S. Cavalry trained soldiers to do equine dentistry along with farrier skills, and in early America, blacksmiths and self motivated individuals did equine dental work.

As the auto replaced the use of the horse after World War Two, the need for the horse and equine dentistry diminished. Then in the late sixties and seventies as the economy allowed, the recreational use of horses revived the use of the horse. The performance horse world demanded better horses and better performances. Better training techniques, equipment, nutrition, and health care were all thoroughly explored. In the exploration equine dentistry, to an extent it was born again and expanded on.

Next, for what it's worth, to those who would like to discredit my opinion as some coffee shop cowboy from a remote Idaho ranching community. I am no expert on anything, I have no Phd, DVM, or even CED. But the fact is I start over 350 head of colts and work with over 1000 head of horses on an annual basis, and have for the last decade. My business includes some of the top owners, breeders and trainers, in the western, english, and horse rac-

ing industries across the United States, Europe, and Australia.

I have family members and friends that are DVMs and CEDs and I have no bias toward either one. But what I experience in my travels and what I read disturbs me. I think anyone that cares about their horses needs to educate themselves on equine dentistry and the politics that are being shoved down our throats. Some states are trying to define existing laws and pass new laws that that would only allow a DVM, or persons assisted by a DVM to practice equine dentistry.

One of the arguments the DVMs have is that the CEDs are not licensed to administer drugs to a horse. This may be law, but the DVMs are not coming down on horse shoers, horse transporters, breeding barns, trainers, and other horse related services, they all use tranquilizers they they got from their DVM that trust them to use it responsibly.

My only interest in this matter is for the better of the horse, there is no monetary gain to me whether a DVM or a CED works on my horses or my client's horses. My concern, and I would alert other horse people to what is to come if the DVMs have their way. Only a DVM or a DVM assisted person could provide the service for us, this means that we are paying more for the service. A CED to do the work and a DVM to give the drugs. If you have a barn full of horses, which most of my clients would have several days worth of work, you would pay a DVM to be there all day besides the bill from the CED.

Both sides can be argued but the bottom line is the consumer, the horse people are going to pay the price, monetarily and with the quality of work, or lack of. The DVMs law would say licensed DVMs are legally allowed to do dental work. The mes-

sage this sends is we need to call a DVM for our equine dental needs. But there is nothing to insure that we are getting the level of work needed for the performance horse without some type of quality control to monitor the DVMs ability and effort. My personal experience has taught me over 90% of the DVMs that work on the horses I see are not doing proper work, and when I discuss it with them, don't even know what a performance float or bit seats are and how they are suppose to function. The need for equine dentistry exceeds the numbers available to do the work now, and excluding the CEDs from the field would only create a larger void then we already have. The CEDs can specialize in a mobil service dedicating 100% of their profession to this service where as a DVM is only a part time equine dentist. Without a DVM taking advanced equine dentistry elective course, they have very little knowledge or experience to work on our horses teeth when they finish school, yet the law would say a DVM is the only person we can call on.

I purpose, if the DVMs are "looking after the interest of the consumer" there needs to be a board of "experts", represented by DVMs and CEDs, to approve a non bias list of "Qualified Equine Dentist" based on their ability and effort. They need to be judged on their performance of equine dentistry and not how long they went to school and how much money was spent on knowledge not even related to equine dentistry.

Good Luck and God Bless