



## EQUINE DENTAL PROCEDURES

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Currently, according to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, all diagnostic and treatment procedures in the horse's mouth are considered by the RCVS to be acts of veterinary surgery, with the exception of the manual removal of dental overgrowths with hand instruments. This is also the case for all other body systems involving sensitive vital tissues that are not covered by the Farriers Act 1975. This means that, at present, most equine dental procedures are legally restricted to veterinary surgeons.

However, since the mid 1990's BEVA has recognised that the welfare benefits of improved equine dental care would be better served by providing up-to-date continuing education in **equine dentistry for veterinary surgeons** as well as supporting suitably trained and accredited technicians to perform selected non-invasive procedures in the horse's mouth. To this end, BEVA has run many courses to improve the knowledge and skills of veterinary surgeons keen to perform better, and more up-to-date equine dentistry. In addition, BEVA has contributed to the training and accreditation of lay technicians in this field, now referred to **Equine Dental Technicians**. In association with the British Veterinary Dental Association (BVDA), BEVA runs an accreditation examination and successful candidates are eligible to join the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (**BAEDT**), who now also help run this examination.

In addition, on advice from European veterinary dental associations including the BVDA and from human dental specialists, BEVA and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) have evolved a grading system of procedures, now accepted by the RCVS, the British Veterinary Association (BVA), the BAEDT, the BVDA, and the European Veterinary Dental College (EVDC), that clarifies those procedures which can safely be delegated to non-professional technicians without compromising the animals' safety. Although currently there is no legal basis for non-professionals to perform acts of veterinary surgery (except where specified in the VSA), the RCVS has indicated that they did not see a public interest in prosecuting veterinary surgeons collaborating with accredited EDT's to perform non-invasive procedures (categories 1 and 2 only) provided certain conditions are met.

Currently the BAEDT is the only association for dental technicians which BEVA endorses and encourages its members to support. The current VSA provides legal protection for animals and their owners against potential suffering as a result of procedures performed illegally by lay persons. There is no legal basis for non-veterinarians to perform any invasive veterinary procedures (category 3), and there is a very strong scientific and welfare argument not to deregulate these procedures to non-veterinarians. BEVA does not condone the illegal performance of any invasive veterinary procedures on vital tissues in the horse's mouth by

non-veterinarians, because of the obvious implications on horse welfare. In the absence of a medical degree in veterinary dentistry, neither BEVA nor the BVDA recognise the term “equine dentist”, since this misleads the public that such individuals are medically qualified..

Despite many false dawns, there is no imminent change to the legislation (Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966), but BEVA and BVDA will support the rights of BAEDT members to perform category 1 and 2 procedures (as currently defined) if DEFRA indicates that legislative change is imminent.

The categories as updated on the basis of recent scientific publications are clarified below.

### Equine Dental Procedures for suitably trained/qualified EDTs

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#### **Category 1 Procedures**

Those procedures which an individual can perform after recognised training without specific attainment of qualifications.

- Examination of teeth;
- Removal of sharp enamel points using manual rasps only;
- Removal of small dental overgrowths (maximum 4mm reductions) using manual rasps only;
- Rostral profiling of the first cheek teeth (maximum 4mm reductions), previously termed ‘bit seat shaping’;
- Removal of loose deciduous caps; and
- Removal of supragingival calculus.

#### **Category 2 Procedures** (Replaces category 2 as on 2004 draft)

Additional procedures suitable for delegation to an EDT who has trained and passed an examination approved by DEFRA:

- Examination, evaluation and recording of dental abnormalities;
- The removal of loose teeth or dental fragments with negligible periodontal attachments
- The removal of erupted, non-displaced wolf teeth in the upper or lower jaw under direct and continuous veterinary supervision;
- Palliative rasping of fractured and adjacent teeth; and
- The use of motorised dental instruments where these are used to reduce overgrowths and remove sharp enamel points only. Horses should be sedated unless it is deemed safe to undertake any proposed procedure without sedation, with full informed consent of the owner.

**Category 3 procedures**

All other procedures and any new procedures, which arise as a result of scientific and technical development, would by default fall into category 3, which are those procedures restricted to qualified veterinary surgeons and are not proposed for deregulation. It is therefore NOT legal for these to be performed by non-veterinarians.

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