

February 21st, 2025

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

Our names are Lindsey Moneta-Larson and Jennifer Posey. We are co-owners of a three doctor equine veterinary clinic based in Oregon City: Pacific Crest Equine Veterinary Services. We have been equine-only veterinarians for twelve and twenty-two years, respectively. We do not support Senate Bill 976.

SB 976 puts horses and horse owners at risk. There are no established national or state standards for these non-veterinarian equine “dentists.” Thus, a statement of a “valid degree or certification” carries very little meaning. The programs that these individuals attend comprise only weeks of training, there is no minimum education that must be obtained before attending these programs, no standardized exam that they must pass before calling themselves dentists and no regulatory oversight once they have obtained their degree or certification.

On the other hand, veterinarians have obtained a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree which includes four years in veterinary school, typically preceded by four years in a bachelor’s program, and at the end of which we must pass the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination. As veterinarians, we have spent years obtaining our degrees and afterwards maintain our state licensing by accumulating a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education every two years. As there is no standard regulatory body for the non-veterinary equine dentist and there is also no requirement for continuing education. Equine dental schools are not equivalent to human dental schools, which are also four year medical degree programs. Even dental hygienists in the human dental field have education programs lasting an average of at least two years, must pass board exams, and become licensed.

Equine dental care has made tremendous advancements in the last several decades and equine veterinarians have been at the forefront. Effective equine dentistry requires a complete exam of the oral cavity with the horse’s mouth held open by a mouth speculum so the farthest molars and soft tissues of the mouth can be fully evaluated by both a visual inspection and by inserting the hand/forearm into the mouth to feel all of the teeth.

To effectively and safely perform an oral exam and any procedures the patient must be sedated with prescription drugs. This will almost always include drugs that can pose a risk to human health if administered or handled incorrectly. One such drug is xylazine, which is very commonly used in equine dentistry but has recently made the news as being a particular problem when found laced in fentanyl and has contributed to the risk of human drug overdoses and deaths. These sedatives are only available to licensed veterinarians, and yet many of these individuals practicing equine dentistry obtain and use these sedatives through questionable means and without veterinary oversight.

Dentistry on the equine patient without proper sedation is at best not very effective, and at worst extremely harmful. We do not believe that these individuals are setting out to purposely cause harm to horses, but we also know that they are not held to any particular standard of care and there is no recourse for the horse or owner if complications occur.

Many of these individuals who have been performing equine dentistry in Oregon do not even reside in the state. If a problem arises after they have performed a procedure they have often already left the state and are not available for any follow-up care. They do not have the authority or ability to prescribe medications such as pain medications or antibiotics. On the other hand, as equine veterinarians we are entrenched in our local horse communities, we work normal hours during the day and rotate being the doctor on call so we have a veterinarian available 24/7 to respond to our client's equine veterinary emergencies. Equine dentistry is an avenue for us to maintain a valid veterinarian-client-patient-relationship with our clients so we can best assist them. When we see a horse for a dental exam we look at the entire horse and the client has a chance to discuss other potential medical needs for their equine companion.

At this time we believe that equine dentistry is best left in the hands of equine veterinarians. Those who are otherwise performing any level of dentistry have no set national or state standard of care or licensing, do not have the authority to obtain and administer sedatives which are required to perform safe and effective dental exams and procedures, and have no regulatory oversight should any problems arise.

In a similar vein, pregnancy checking cattle is best regulated to veterinarians as well. Simply checking the pregnancy status is only part of the picture. A veterinarian will actually examine the reproductive tract versus simply stating "pregnant" or "open." If a cow is having trouble conceiving or maintaining a pregnancy a veterinarian is best suited to diagnose the issue and work with the owner to assess the overall health status of the cow and what may be contributing to the cow's fertility issue. Again, this interaction also helps to maintain a valid veterinarian client patient relationship.

In conclusion, as veterinarians we are the strongest proponents of animal health and we strongly believe that equine dentistry and cattle pregnancy assessments should remain in the hands of licensed veterinarians. We do not support SB 976.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We urge you to vote no on SB 976 and be a supporter of animal health and welfare and your Oregon licensed veterinarians.

Sincerely,
Drs. Lindsey Moneta-Larson & Jennifer Posey