

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

My name is Dr. Stephanie Ramsey, and I am the owner and veterinarian of Big Creek Veterinary Services, LLC in Astoria, Oregon. I provide veterinary care to horses and livestock such as cattle, sheep, and goats.

I am writing in opposition of SB 976, in regards to both the allowance of unlicensed individuals to perform equine dentistry and pregnancy verification in cattle.

While both these allowances seem reasonable on the surface, the potential for harm to both people and animals runs deep.

The proposed bill states that “an individual who holds a valid degree or certification in equine dentistry” shall be allowed to perform equine dentistry without a license. Unfortunately, there is no validation or standardization of “certification;” there is no such thing as “a valid degree... in equine dentistry” unless you are a veterinarian who has accomplished board-certification specializing in equine dentistry. Programs claiming to provide training and certification are not accredited, there is no oversight, and a certificate simply implies the person participated in that stand-alone program. The certificate is not recognized by any association, organization, state or federal licensure, or insurance programs. As such, there is no way to validate whether people participating in these programs are actually qualified. Furthermore, because they are not licensed, there are also no continuing education (CE) requirements to ensure that their skills and knowledge are correct and current with standards of care.

There is often confusion among horse owners that, because these individuals refer to themselves as “equine dentists” or “certified equine dental technicians,” they are operating in an official capacity and with all necessary education, licenses and insurance. Clients equate “equine dentist” with their own dentist, who is a medical doctor. In veterinary medicine, certified or licensed technicians are akin to nurses in human medicine – they have received formal, nationally accredited training and degrees, and are licensed as such. When unlicensed individuals refer to themselves in these official terms they are intentionally misleading clients.

Conversely, veterinarians performing dentistry receive proper training throughout their education, and practitioners who focus on equine dentistry pursue numerous hours in training and CE beyond veterinary school. To perform safe and effective oral exams and dentistry in horses, they must be sedated. Individuals who are not doctors lack the

training, licensure, and insurance to safely and legally acquire, possess and administer these anesthetic medications. Without being licensed by the state and possessing a DEA license, these lay individuals often illegally acquire and administer sedatives, including xylazine and opioids, posing a threat to horse and human welfare alike.

The horse is more than a collection of teeth. A veterinarian is qualified to assess the whole horse, determine whether performing dentistry is the appropriate and safe course of action, or whether other interventions are required. This requires a multimodal approach that only a veterinarian can provide: a physical exam, lab work, diet evaluation, radiographs, and often other prescription medications such as antibiotics, antiinflammatories and pain medications. Without this holistic approach, animals will receive improper care. At best, this delays proper diagnosis and treatment. At worst, it creates potentially dangerous situations: horses that are not physically stable for anesthesia and dentistry will be sedated or restrained in unsafe manners and put at risk of harming themselves and humans.

Similarly, cattle are more than just their pregnant or non-pregnant uterus. When I am performing pregnancy evaluation on cattle, I am also evaluating the health of the cow, answering questions, and can evaluate the uterus and ovaries if she is not conceiving, which provides valuable insight beyond simply whether or not she is pregnant. The rancher and I discuss treatment and management protocols, and the herd in general. This is all part of the necessary interactions to maintain a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) in food production animals. If they have animals about which they're concerned, I can also address them at the same farm visit. The outcome is improved efficiency and animal welfare.

Thank you for your time and commitment to animal care and welfare. I join my colleagues and other experienced members of the equine and livestock industries in urging you to vote "NO" on the proposed Senate Bill 976.

Best regards,

Stephanie Ramsey, DVM