

VIRGINIA BOARD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Delegation of Dental Polishing and Scaling

Dental prophylaxis is an important medical procedure used in preserving the health and preventing the spread of disease in companion animals. Dental polishing and scaling of teeth above the gum line (supragingival) by an unlicensed person may only be delegated by a veterinarian to his/her “properly trained assistant.” The veterinarian is responsible for assuring his/her assistant is properly trained and remains responsible for the health and safety of the animal. Subgingival scaling shall not be delegated to an assistant.

References

Code of Virginia

§ 54.1-3800. Practice of veterinary medicine.

Any person shall be regarded as practicing veterinary medicine within the meaning of this chapter who represents himself, directly or indirectly, publicly or privately, as a veterinary doctor or uses any title, words, abbreviation or letters in a manner or under circumstances which may reasonably induce the belief that the person using them is qualified to practice veterinary medicine.

Any person shall be deemed to be practicing veterinary medicine who performs the diagnosis, treatment, correction, change, relief or prevention of animal disease, deformity, defect, injury, or other physical or mental conditions; including the performance of surgery or dentistry, the prescription or administration of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic, or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique, and the use of any manual or mechanical procedure for embryo transfer, for testing for pregnancy, or for correcting sterility or infertility, or to render advice or recommendation with regard to any of the above.

Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit persons permitted or authorized by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to do so from providing care for wildlife as defined in § [29.1-100](#), provided that the Department determines that such persons are in compliance with its regulations and permit conditions.

§ 54.1-3806. Licensed veterinary technicians.

The Board may license a veterinary technician to perform acts relating to the treatment or the maintenance of the health of any animal under the immediate and direct supervision of a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the Commonwealth or a veterinarian who is employed by the United States or the Commonwealth while actually engaged in the performance of his official duties. No person licensed as a veterinary technician may perform surgery, diagnose, or prescribe medication for any animal.

Regulations

18VAC150-20-10. Definitions.

The following words and terms when used in this chapter shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Surgery" means treatment through revision, destruction, incision or other structural alteration of animal tissue. Surgery does not include dental extractions of single-rooted teeth or skin closures performed by a licensed veterinary technician upon a diagnosis and pursuant to direct orders from a veterinarian.

18VAC150-20-140. Unprofessional conduct.

Unprofessional conduct as referenced in §54.1-3807(5) of the Code of Virginia shall include the following:

7. Practicing veterinary medicine or as an equine dental technician in such a manner as to endanger the health and welfare of his patients or the public, or being unable to practice veterinary medicine or as an equine dental technician with reasonable skill and safety.

10. Allowing unlicensed persons to perform acts restricted to the practice of veterinary medicine, veterinary technology or an equine dental technician including any invasive procedure on a patient or delegation of tasks to persons who are not properly trained or authorized to perform such tasks.

18VAC150-20-172. Delegation of duties.

A. A licensed veterinarian may delegate the administration (including by injection) of Schedule VI drugs to a properly trained assistant under his immediate supervision. The prescribing veterinarian has a specific duty and responsibility to determine that the assistant has had adequate training to safely administer the drug in a manner prescribed.

B. Injections involving chemotherapy drugs, subgingival scaling, intubation, or the placement of intravenous catheters shall not be delegated to an assistant. An assistant shall also not be delegated the induction of sedation or anesthesia by any means. The monitoring of a sedated or anesthetized patient may be delegated to an assistant, provided a veterinarian or licensed veterinary technician remains on premises until the patient is fully recovered.

C. Tasks that may be delegated by a licensed veterinarian to a properly trained assistant include:

1. Grooming;

2. Feeding;

3. Cleaning;

4. Restraining;

5. Assisting in radiology;

6. Setting up diagnostic tests;

7. Prepping a patient or equipment for surgery;

8. Dental polishing and scaling of teeth above the gum line (supragingival);

9. Drawing blood samples; or

10. Filling of Schedule VI prescriptions under the direction of a veterinarian licensed in Virginia.

D. A licensed veterinarian may delegate duties electronically, verbally, or in writing to appropriate veterinary personnel provided the veterinarian has physically examined the patient within the previous 36 hours.

E. Massage therapy, physical therapy, or laser therapy may be delegated by a veterinarian to persons qualified by training and experience by an order from the veterinarian.

F. The veterinarian remains responsible for the duties being delegated and remains responsible for the health and safety of the animal.