

19<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Hi Folks

I am forwarding an email in case you want to cut and paste or copy/amend and forward to the relevant politicians and decisions makers (email details below) regarding this issue.

For those who are unaware, there is an ongoing push to allow the practise of equine dentistry to reside exclusively in the realm of veterinarians. Whilst I was in Victoria in February this was a hot topic of discussion, with just about everyone I talked to being vehemently opposed to the concept, and I agree – my reasons are outlined in the letter below. It seems even the intervening two months the debate has continued and the proposal has gained ground.

Please take the time to read my email and compose a letter of your own - let's make our collective voice heard on this matter....for our own sakes but more importantly for the welfare of our horses (and donkeys!!). Please also feel free to circulate this email to your equine contacts and others who can appreciate what is at stake.

Regards

Elizabeth Denniss  
Bridgetown WA

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## **Letter sent to politicians and decision-makers**

### **Subject: My right to employ a diploma-qualified/non-veterinarian equine dentist**

Importance: High

To Whom It May Concern

As the Vice President of the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA Inc (a charity established to rescue at risk heritage brumbies) and a small scale horse breeder I am writing to advise that I am extremely alarmed at the current push to allow the practise of equine dentistry to reside exclusively in the realm of veterinarians. This outcome, should it be achieved, essentially removes my right to decide what is in the best interest of my horses and would force me to require the services of a vet regardless of whether this was actually in the best interest of the animal. I am horrified that in a civilized country the threat exists for me to be dictated to in such a manner. I strongly feel I have the right to determine what services I use to treat my animals, and how I use my financial resources.

Living in rural areas the availability of a vet is often restricted by distance. There are only a very small handful of vets in the south west area even basically qualified or who have any experience to check and attend to my horse's teeth. They charge extremely high travel costs just to get to the property. Having spoken to several of the other vets in the south west area who do NOT do teeth (due to the wild horse rehab work the charity has a wide range of contacts) it is clear they would prefer to NOT have to take on the additional job of equine dentistry. The equipment and training is expensive and they admit they could do without the travel.

On the other hand, we have 3 fully experienced, competent and qualified equine dentists in our area, all of whom charge less than the vets, do a better job and are far better at handling our horses. Why fix what isn't broken? It appears that this proposal is motivated by greed and based on metropolitan scenarios where the very real challenges of costs associated with travel due to the tyranny of distance faced by rural residents and vets have not even been considered.

This ongoing issue to limit equine dentistry is at best ignorant, and at worst, undemocratic. There are definite animal welfare concerns here - especially when you want an inexperienced and only basically trained individual such as a vet to carry out difficult and extensive dental work on a horse, instead of a highly experienced, qualified and confident Equine Dentist.

My opposition to this is further heightened by the fact that employment opportunities are limited in rural areas. There is more than enough work to share among the equine dentists and the vets. Further, in an attempt to retain our local youth in our towns my Youth Development Officer and I are in the process of identifying training and career paths for young people that will permit them to be able to live, work and reside in their home town/region. Young people from rural areas face additional challenges should they chose to attend university for career pathways – they have no social or familial support in the city; often have to work long hours to afford their rent/food and tuition as well as attend classes and study - many find it too overwhelming and return home without finishing their studies.

There are currently opportunities for training in courses such as Equine Dentistry, Farrier/Hoof Trimming and Equine Guided Education which can be achieved without extensive costs (when compared to 3 years at university) or time commitments that can benefit young people to develop a career in the equine industry. Attending university to become a vet should not be a pre-requisite for careers in these fields of endeavour when there are already existing, accredited programs that provide for skills and training in these areas.

I strongly urge you to consider that we, the equine community as a “user group” do not wish to see this proposal come to fruition and ask you to consider the enormous implications should you support such a proposal.

Elizabeth Denniss  
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