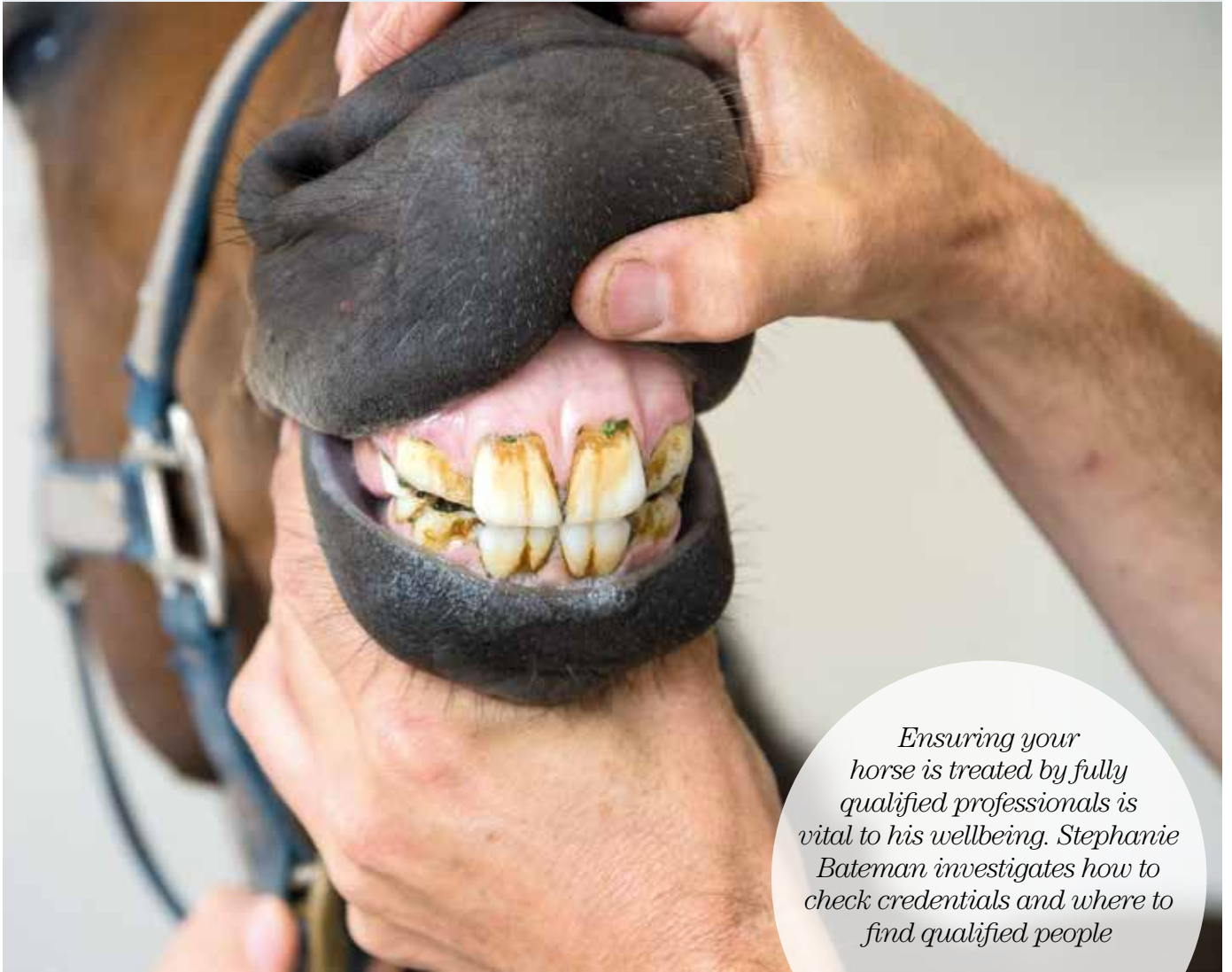


Is your horse in SAFE HANDS?



Ensuring your horse is treated by fully qualified professionals is vital to his wellbeing. Stephanie Bateman investigates how to check credentials and where to find qualified people

“Veterinary care in the UK is governed by an act of parliament called The Veterinary Surgeon’s Act 1966,” explains David Mountford, CEO of the British Equestrian Veterinary Association (BEVA).

“In 1966, there weren’t the plethora of allied professionals working commercially in the animal environment, so the act doesn’t really address the challenges that we face today.

“With so many different qualifications and experts to choose from, deciding on who is suitably trained to treat your horse can be confusing.”

Here, we discuss four of the most common services provided to horse owners, and what owners should be aware of when choosing a professional.

◉ DENTAL CARE

STRAIGHT TO THE HORSE’S MOUTH

Knowing who to employ to look after your horse’s mouth can be confusing, but by using your veterinary surgeon or an equine dental technician (EDT) who is a member of the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT), you ensure that your horse receives dental care from a properly qualified individual who has appropriate insurance and, in the case of your vet, is professionally regulated. Individuals who are not appropriately qualified, despite describing themselves as ‘equine dentists’ are not allowed to provide the same type of dental care for your horse.

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CASE STUDY

ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY...

"We used the same dentist for more than six years to treat our ponies' teeth every six months," Diane Thomas told us. "He used to turn up in his van with 'Equine Dentist' written on the side, rasp their teeth, then leave.

"I trusted he was doing a good job, as my ponies never had problems eating and didn't show any signs of discomfort. Then one day, he just didn't turn up for his appointment and wouldn't answer his phone.

My farrier recommended a qualified dentist and we

started using him instead.

"The first time the new dentist came to treat our ponies, he found pus-filled abscesses in their mouths where their sharp teeth had been rubbing the inside of their cheeks, probably for years. Our previous dentist hadn't been dealing with their issues at all. I felt so guilty.

Looking back, I'm not even sure the previous dentist had any qualifications - I never checked.

"The service the new dentist provided was a far cry from the previous dentist. I was shocked

at how professional he was - he used a proper mouth gag, spent much longer rasping their teeth, and even filled out a form with diagrams to show the work he'd done after every session.

"You think you're being a responsible owner having your horse's teeth checked regularly, but the person we trusted and presumed to be qualified let us down.

"I now make sure any new person treating my horses is fully qualified and comes recommended by my vet."

◉ DENTAL CARE continued

STRAIGHT TO THE HORSE'S MOUTH

WHO CAN TREAT MY HORSE?

All diagnostics and treatments in the horse's mouth are Acts of Veterinary Surgery under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The only exception is considered to be the manual removal of small dental overgrowths and sharp enamel points with a hand rasp. However, there are a number of procedures that may be delegated safely to suitably qualified Equine Dental Technicians (EDTs).

All dental procedures are categorised into three groups (see list, right).

Anyone can currently carry out Category 1 procedures, the law turns a blind eye to appropriately qualified EDTs carrying out Category 1 and 2 procedures, and only vets can undertake category 1, 2 and 3 procedures.

One of the problems with dental care is that owners can't see what is happening in their horse's mouth. There is potential for a lot of damage to be caused, or for defects not to have been addressed without it being obvious to the owner.

Ask your veterinary practice to recommend a local EDT or vet with specialist dental experience. You can check if your EDT is on the BAEDT register by looking on the BAEDT or BEVA websites. ◉

Source: David Mountford, CEO of BEVA

◉ MORE INFO

For further information, visit the BEVA website at www.beva.org.uk



Parkway Photography

Right: One of the problems with dental care is that owners can't see what is happening in their horse's mouth

1

CATEGORY 1

Procedures that are not commonly considered to be Acts of Veterinary Surgery such as examination of teeth and removal of sharp edges using a manual hand rasp.

2

CATEGORY 2

Procedures that are Acts of Veterinary Surgery but can be safely delegated to suitably qualified EDTs such as using power tools to rasp teeth and removal of wolf teeth under veterinary supervision.

3

CATEGORY 3

Procedures that are Acts of Veterinary Surgery and cannot be safely delegated, such as removal of non-erupted wolf teeth and other teeth. Vets are regulated by law and can only carry out procedures that are within their own area of competence.

QUALIFICATIONS

Appropriately qualified EDTs are considered to be those who have passed either the Worldwide Association of Equine Dentists (WWAED) or the BEVA/British Veterinary Dental Association (BVDA) exam.

The BEVA/BVDA exam involves submitting a case log of 300 dental cases, spending a minimum of five full days working under the supervision of an EDT, and attending the two-day BEVA/BVDA advanced theoretical EDT course.

The course teaches advanced dental anatomy, equine nutrition, dental disorders and treatments, microbiology, disinfection, health and safety and current legislation in Britain today.

The BEVA/BVDA exam consists of rigorous theoretical and practical examinations.

FARRIERY

NOT JUST ANY OLD IRON



Registered farriers are governed by the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (FRA) and overseen by the Farriers Registration Council. The FRA is in place to ensure that people who are carrying out farriery are safe and competent to do so. If they're found guilty of professional misconduct they can be removed from the register and are no longer legally able to perform farriery.

WHO CAN TREAT MY HORSE?

Only a vet or qualified farrier who is registered with the FRA can legally shoe your horse (most vets would not consider themselves to be competent in farriery and therefore would be precluded from shoeing).

However, the law surrounding farriery is an old law, and currently, a person only has to be registered in order to prepare a foot for a shoe. Anyone can legally trim the hoof/foot so long as they do not intend to fit a shoe to it.

QUALIFICATIONS

In order to qualify for registration, candidates have to complete an approved apprenticeship or period of training, and pass a thorough exam through the National Farrier Training Agency.

Candidates applying for an advanced apprenticeship in farriery must serve a period of apprenticeship of four years and two months while employed by an

Approved Training Farrier.

During training, apprentices learn how to assess the needs of each particular horse, make and modify tools and shoes by forging, and trim and shoe horse's hooves.

People who trim horse's feet and are not registered with the FRA, such as 'barefoot trimmers' do not legally require any qualification. There are some 'barefoot trimmers' who have done a lot of training and are very knowledgeable, but there is no formal qualification or legal obligation for them to work within set boundaries.

Owners should be aware that there are risks involved with using the services of people who are not registered farriers or vets.

To check if your farrier is registered, or to find a registered farrier in your area, visit: www.farrier-reg.gov.uk

Source: David Mountford, CEO of BEVA

SADDLE FITTING

TALKING TACK

A well-made, well-fitted saddle is vital for getting the best performance out of both horse and rider; but a saddle that is poorly made or doesn't fit well, is a disaster waiting to happen. The Society of Master Saddlers (SMS) provides training and qualifications to ensure SMS saddle fitters are capable of doing their job

QUALIFICATIONS

It takes a minimum of three years to become a registered, qualified saddle fitter with the SMS and hold the Society of Master Saddlers' City & Guilds Qualified Saddle Fitters' Certificate.

Candidates initially attend a two-day Introductory Saddle Fitting Course, followed by three years' experience working with a qualified saddle fitter. A four-day SMS qualification course is the final stage before assessment.

The rigorous examination is approved and verified by City & Guilds

and requires the candidate to prove competency in horse conformation and movement, saddle fault finding, measuring the horse, and the practical saddle fitting of two horses. They must also pass a written exam.

To maintain the qualification, an SMS refresher/CPD day must be attended every two years. Members are also encouraged to further their education by attending other saddlery and saddle-fitting courses.

It's not illegal for anyone to operate as a saddle fitter. But unqualified people will very likely not have the necessary knowledge to fit a saddle



and could cause irreparable damage.

Using an SMS saddle fitter gives you the assurance that the saddle fitter has been properly trained and has a wealth of experience, as well as having the back-up of the Society if things go wrong.

Source: Hazel Moreley, CEO Society of Master Saddlers

MORE INFO

To find your local saddle fitter and for more information, visit the SMS website: mastersaddlers.co.uk

◉ MUSCULOSKELETAL

BEING BODY POLITIC

Musculoskeletal therapy underpins many titles such as ‘the back man’, physiotherapist, osteopath, chiropractor and massage therapist.

WHO CAN TREAT MY HORSE?

By the letter of the law, under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 a musculoskeletal therapist – of whatever type – is not legally allowed to make a diagnosis, and can only treat a horse if a vet has seen the case beforehand and referred it for a particular therapy.

However the law is often ignored; there are many non-vets who offer musculoskeletal diagnoses and treatment. Anyone can call themselves a veterinary or equine physiotherapist so owners should be careful when choosing someone to work on their horse. The situation can be very confusing, but the most important thing to remember is that you should always seek veterinary advice and referral when employing musculoskeletal therapists, whatever their title or qualifications.

Right: Legally, a musculoskeletal therapist, of whatever type, is not allowed to make a diagnosis



QUALIFICATIONS

There are currently at least 25 different animal musculoskeletal associations in the UK and around 50 different qualifications.

Some of them are recognised and respected associations who require the person to undertake lengthy training, pass in-depth exams, and register with the association. But there are also ‘qualifications’ that require minimal training or experience and practitioners who have little or no accountability.

A really sensible, safe thing to do is to make sure that, whatever a musculoskeletal

therapist is doing to your horse, it's done with the knowledge and support of your vet. Even if your horse is having routine maintenance treatment, you still want your vet to be aware of what the therapist is doing.

The RAMP register is an online register of professionals, supported by BEVA, set up by those trained in chiropractic, osteopathy or physiotherapy. It aims to endorse best practice methods in the industry of animal musculoskeletal therapy and is a useful start point if you are looking for qualified, accountable musculoskeletal therapists. (rampregister.org)

A GAME OF NUMBERS

25 There are currently at least 25 different animal musculoskeletal associations in the UK

50 There are around 50 different qualifications, but only some of them are recognised and respected