



## State Summary Report

# Authority of veterinary technicians and other non-veterinarians to perform dental procedures

Updated May 2019

This table was created to address the scope of practice for veterinary technicians (VT) and other non-veterinarians with respect to dental procedures or dental surgeries. Licensure requirements and other issues are not addressed. Research indicates that no current statute specifically allows a veterinary technician to perform unsupervised dental procedures, though where a state allows a non-veterinarian to perform equine dental work, a VT would seem to qualify for the performance of that activity. Generally, statutes and regulations appear to indicate that varying levels of supervision are required for dental work.

Some states do allow non-veterinarians to perform equine dental work, although additional conditions may apply, so please check their statutes and regulations for additional information. Those states include: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia exempt equine teeth floating from the practice of veterinary medicine, thereby allowing non-veterinarians to perform the task without supervision by a veterinarian, although it appears that these exemptions are limited to using non-motorized tools.

For practice act exemptions not related to veterinary technicians, see <https://www.avma.org/advocacy/stateandlocal/pages/sr-cavm-exemptions.aspx>.

Alabama	Teeth cleaning allowed under indirect supervision and, if the animal is anesthetized, then direct supervision. Assistance with surgery is permissible under immediate supervision.
Alaska	Delegation of tasks allowed, however, performance of surgery is prohibited. Duties performed by a veterinary technician (VT) must be those for which the VT is trained and that are compatible with the practice act. With supervision, a variety of tasks could be performed.
Arizona	A VT may perform the tasks delegated by a licensed veterinarian while under the direction, supervision, and control of the licensed veterinarian. Performance of surgery is prohibited.  An equine dental practitioner can perform teeth floating under the general supervision of a licensed veterinarian. This practitioner cannot prescribe, administer, or both any drug or medicine.
Arkansas	Before engaging in the practice of equine teeth floating, an individual practitioner shall present to the board signed letters of recommendation from two (2) clients who have previously employed the individual practitioner and who bear witness to the individual practitioner's ability to perform equine teeth floating.
California	Requires supervision for VT, largely at the discretion of the veterinarian, with some exceptions. Surgery is prohibited and direct supervision is required for dental extractions.  Nothing prohibits a lay person from utilizing cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, or toothbrushes on an animal's teeth.
Colorado	The practice of dentistry may be delegated to veterinary personnel under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

	<p>Dentistry does not include teeth cleaning or preventive dental procedures that are limited to the utilization of cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, or toothbrushes on an animal's teeth.</p> <p>"Teeth floating" or "floating of teeth" by persons experienced in that practice a limited by this rule is deemed an act that may be delegated by a licensed veterinarian but must occur under direct supervision. Sedation must be provided by the licensed veterinarian as part of the procedure. "Teeth floating" or "floating of teeth" by persons experienced in that procedure is limited to the use of instruments in order to reduce or eliminate sharp or uneven edges on teeth. Instruments may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-powered, hand tools under indirect supervision (The use of an oral sedative prescribed by a licensed veterinarian to the owner is permitted); and</li> <li>2. Motorized, high speed tools (sedation required) under direct supervision.</li> </ol>
Connecticut	<p>The floating of teeth in horses by persons experienced in that practice and the performance of myofascial trigger point therapy by persons experienced in that practice shall not be deemed to be the practice of veterinary medicine.</p> <p>"Floating teeth" means using hand-held rasps to reduce or eliminate sharp or uneven edges on a horse's upper and lower molars to avoid injury to the tongue and cheeks and to improve chewing food but does not include treating decay or tumors or extracting teeth.</p>
Delaware	<p>At no time may a licensed veterinary technician perform surgery, including operative dentistry, and oral surgery.</p> <p>A veterinary technician may perform dental extractions with no periosteal elevation, no sectioning of tooth and no re-sectioning of bone; and dental procedures including, but not limited to, removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque and stains, smoothing, filing, polishing of teeth under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.</p>
District of Columbia	<p>Acts relating to maintenance of the health of or treatment of any animal performed under the immediate and direct supervision and control of a licensed veterinarian. Performance of surgery prohibited.</p>
Florida	<p>All tasks which may be delegated to a veterinary aide, nurse, laboratory technician, intern, or other employee of a licensed veterinarian shall be performed only under the "immediate supervision" of a licensed veterinarian with some exceptions.</p> <p>The manual hand floating of teeth in horses by persons shall not be deemed to be the practice of veterinary medicine.</p>
Georgia	<p>Any veterinary technician must at all times be under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian whenever practicing veterinary technology in this state. The level of supervision shall be consistent with the delegated animal health care task. Performance of surgery is prohibited.</p> <p>A veterinary technician working under the direction, supervision and control of a duly licensed veterinarian may provide the following animal patient care under direct supervision: dental procedures including, but not limited to the removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque and stains; the smoothing, filing, and polishing of teeth; or the floatation or dressing of equine teeth; dental extraction not requiring sectioning of the tooth or the re-sectioning of bone.</p>

Hawaii	A VT may perform dental cleaning under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
Idaho	<p>Veterinarians are required to diagnose and perform operative dentistry, oral surgery, and teeth extraction procedures. VTs are prohibited from diagnosis and performance of procedures that constitute operative dentistry/oral surgery.</p> <p>Operative dentistry and oral surgery is any dental procedure that invades the hard or soft oral tissue including, but not limited to, a procedure that alters the structure of one (1) or more teeth or repairs damaged and diseased teeth, or the deliberate extraction of one (1) or more teeth. Operative dentistry and oral surgery do not include, removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque, stains, floating to shape the teeth, or smoothing, filing or polishing of tooth surfaces above the gum line.</p> <p>Any person may utilize cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice or toothbrushes to clean an animal's teeth.</p>
Illinois	<p>A CVT is prohibited from performing tasks that include, but are not limited to, dental extractions and floating teeth. However, a CVT can perform dental prophylaxis only under the direct or immediate supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>An individual providing equine dentistry services requested by a veterinarian licensed to practice in this State, an owner, or an owner's agent shall not be deemed to be the practice of veterinary medicine. "Equine dentistry services" means floating teeth without the use of drugs or extraction.</p>
Indiana	A VT may not diagnose prognose, prescribe medical or surgical treatment, or perform as a surgeon. However, the technician may perform routine procedures defined by board rules while under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian who shall be responsible for the technician's performance.
Iowa	VTs must act under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian and may not perform surgery, diagnosis and have no prescriptive authority.
Kansas	Supervision required for any employee participating in the practice of veterinary medicine; however, a veterinarian shall not delegate diagnosis; performance of any surgical procedure; or the prescription of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthesia or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique.
Kentucky	<p>The services of a veterinary technologist or veterinary technician shall be limited to the performance of duties under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian except for the routine administration of drugs, vaccines, parasite control agents, and growth stimulating implants for food animals prescribed by a veterinarian and under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian where a veterinarian-client-patient relationship exists.</p> <p>A veterinary technologist or veterinary technician shall not diagnose, prescribe medication or treatment, or perform surgical procedures other than castrating and dehorning of food animals.</p> <p>A veterinary technologist or veterinary technician may assist a veterinarian in all duties of veterinary medicine and surgery.</p>
Louisiana	In branches of veterinary medicine other than equine dentistry and livestock dentistry, with proper training and under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, laypeople and registered veterinary technicians employed by a licensed veterinarian may perform supragingival scaling and polishing of teeth, making and developing dental radiographs, taking impressions, production of dental models, and the charting of dental pathology. All other dental operations must be performed by a licensed veterinarian.

	<p>In the branch of veterinary medicine dealing with equine dentistry, with proper training and under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, laypeople and registered veterinary technicians employed by a licensed veterinarian may perform the rasping (floating) of molar, premolar, and canine teeth, and the removal of deciduous incisor and premolar teeth (caps). All other dental operations, including but not limited to the extraction of teeth, amputation of large molar, incisor, or canine teeth, the extraction of first premolar teeth (wolf teeth) and repair of damaged or diseased teeth must be performed by a licensed veterinarian.</p> <p>Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a registered veterinary technician may perform veterinary medical assistance under the direct supervision of a veterinarian licensed to practice in this state approved by the board, except that no registered veterinary technician shall perform animal diagnosis, the prescribing of treatment or medications, or any surgical procedures.</p>
Maine	<p>A VT may engage in the practice of veterinary technology on the basis of written or oral instruction of a veterinarian. Specifically, the practice of veterinary technology means the performance of patient care or other services that require a technical understanding of veterinary medicine.</p> <p>However, this definition does not include diagnosing, making prognoses, performing surgery or prescribing a drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic or other imaging, therapeutic or diagnostic technique or nutritional substance or technique on, for or to any patient.</p>
Maryland	<p>A veterinarian may not permit a technician to perform the following procedures on an animal while the animal is under that veterinarian's care: dental extractions. A VT may perform simple dental extractions of loose teeth that do not involve flaps or tooth sectioning under the responsible direct supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>The practice of veterinary medicine does not include a person who floats (files) equine teeth or removes caps or who scales or cleans animal teeth.</p>
Massachusetts	<p>The practice of veterinary medicine does not include the nursing care to animals in the establishment or facilities of a registered veterinarian under his general supervision, direction, and control by the employees of the veterinarian or the assisting of a veterinarian during the course of any procedure or treatment.</p>
Michigan	<p>A VT may perform activities under supervision of a veterinarian. A veterinary technician shall not diagnose animal diseases, prescribe medical or surgical treatment, or perform as a surgeon.</p>
Minnesota	<p>A person may perform equine teeth floating services after submitting to the board the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proof of current certification from the International Association of Equine Dentistry or other professional equine dentistry association as determined by the board; and</li> <li>2. A written statement signed by a supervising veterinarian experienced in large animal medicine that the applicant will be under direct or indirect supervision of the veterinarian when floating equine teeth.</li> </ol>
Mississippi	<p>A VT can perform patient care or other services that require a technical understanding of veterinary medicine on the basis of written or oral instruction of a veterinarian, excluding diagnosing, prognosing, performing surgery or prescribing drugs, medicine or appliances.</p>

Missouri	VT activities under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian, dental prophylaxis with direct supervision.
Montana	Support personnel (including VTs) shall work under the supervision of a veterinarian who is responsible for the services performed by support personnel. Support personnel shall not diagnose, initiate treatment, perform surgery, prescribe medicine, or prognosticate.
Nebraska	<p>Direct supervision is required for the following dental procedures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque, and stains;</li> <li>2. Smoothing, filing, and polishing of teeth;</li> <li>3. Flotation or dressing of equine teeth.</li> </ol> <p>Immediate supervision is required for a dental extraction not requiring the sectioning of a tooth or the re-sectioning of bone.</p> <p>Making a diagnosis or prognosis; prescribing any treatment, drugs, medications or appliances; performing surgery or administering rabies vaccine is prohibited.</p>
Nevada	<p>A VT may perform the following tasks under the immediate supervision of a supervising veterinarian: Removal of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teeth that have extreme mobility and stage 4 periodontal disease; and</li> <li>2. Retained deciduous teeth other than retained deciduous canine teeth.</li> </ol> <p>A VT may perform the following tasks under the immediate or direct supervision of a supervising veterinarian: Dental prophylaxis.</p> <p>With limited exceptions listed under general tasks that can be performed by licensed VTs, veterinary dentistry, as defined in the regulations, may only be performed by a licensed veterinarian under general anesthesia.</p> <p>Non-veterinarians may use cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, toothbrushes or similar items to clean an animal's teeth.</p>
New Hampshire	Equine filing or "floating" of teeth by non-motorized hand tools without sedation is deemed to be accepted livestock management practices and not the practice of veterinary medicine.
New Jersey	VT activities under the supervision and direction of a licensed veterinarian in his/her practice of veterinary medicine with a prohibition on diagnosis, prescriptions, or performing surgery.
New Mexico	<p>Preventive veterinary dental procedures including but not limited to the removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque and stains; the smoothing, filing, polishing of tooth surfaces, or floating or dressing of equine teeth, shall be performed only by licensed veterinarians or under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.</p> <p>This rule does not prohibit any person from utilizing cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, toothbrushes or similar items to clean an animal's teeth.</p>
New York	<p>VT may provide veterinary services under the general supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>Any dentist duly licensed in this state who provides dental care to an animal at the request and under the immediate personal supervision of a licensed veterinarian.</p>
North Carolina	A VT veterinary technician may assist a veterinarian in diagnosis, laboratory analysis, anesthesia and surgical procedures. All activities must be performed under the direction

	and supervision of a veterinarian. Neither the employee nor the veterinary technician may perform any act producing an irreversible change in the animal.
North Dakota	A VT may perform the following services under the direction, supervision, and control of a licensed veterinarian, provided the licensed veterinarian performs a daily physical examination of the animal being treated: Operating ultrasonic and polishing instruments for dental prophylaxis.
Ohio	<p>A VT may perform the following under direct veterinary supervision:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dental prophylaxis, periodontal care, and extraction not involving sectioning of teeth or resection of bone or both of these;</li> <li>2. Equine dental procedures, including the floating of molars, premolars, and canine teeth;</li> <li>3. Removal of deciduous teeth; and</li> <li>4. The extraction of first premolars or wolf teeth.</li> </ol>
Oklahoma	<p>A VT may perform dental extractions while a licensed veterinarian is physically on the premises and under direct supervision. A registered VT may also perform dental scaling, polishing, and flotation or dressing of equine teeth as directed by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian without the continuing physical presence of the licensed veterinarian.</p> <p>Prescription drug use for procedures allowed under certain conditions. VT activities require supervision from a veterinarian. Prohibited VT activities include: diagnosis, prescriptions or surgery.</p> <p>Non-veterinary equine dental care providers may be certified by the Board of Veterinary Medicine, also known as a "practitioner of teeth floating." Teeth floating includes the removal of enamel points and the smoothing, contouring, and leveling of dental arcades and incisors of equine and other farm animals. Does not include dental procedures on canines and felines.</p>
Oregon	<p>Dental operations or procedures shall be performed only by licensed veterinarians, except for those veterinary dental procedures considered to be preventive including, but not limited to, the removal of calculus, soft deposits, plaque, and stains, or the smoothing, filing, or polishing of tooth surfaces. These procedures may be performed by certified veterinary technicians or veterinary assistants under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.</p> <p>VTs are also allowed to assist veterinarians perform dental prophylaxis, including operating ultrasonic dental instruments, and extractions under the immediate supervision of a licensed veterinarian.</p> <p>This rule does not prohibit any person from utilizing cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, toothbrushes, or similar items to maintain an animal's oral hygiene.</p>
Pennsylvania	<p>A VT may perform dental prophylaxis under direct veterinary supervision.</p> <p>Performing surgery; diagnosis; prognosis; providing prescriptions, including treatments, medications or appliances, or attesting to health status is prohibited.</p>
Rhode Island	VT activities assisting the veterinarian are allowed under the general supervision, direction and control of a veterinarian.

South Carolina	<p>A VT may surgically assist a licensed veterinarian and float/dress equine teeth under immediate veterinary supervision. A VT may also perform dental procedures under direct supervision including, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prophylaxis; or</li> <li>2. Procedures not altering the shape, structure, or positional location of teeth in the dental arch.</li> </ol> <p>The Board of Veterinary Medicine shall not issue a cease and desist notice to an individual who has been hired solely for the act of "floating" teeth in an equine.</p>
South Dakota	<p>VT may only work under the direction or supervision of the licensed veterinarian or veterinarians by whom he is employed.</p>
Tennessee	<p>No veterinary technician, veterinary student intern, or employee shall provide any professional services without the responsible supervision of a licensed veterinarian, except that an employee of the veterinarian may be permitted to float teeth using non-motorized equipment without the physical presence of a licensed veterinarian as long as the employee is functioning under the supervision, control, and responsibility of the licensed veterinarian within the context of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship.</p> <p>An individual may clip needle teeth of livestock other than the equine species.</p>
Texas	<p>In dogs and cats, a VT may extract loose teeth or dental fragments with minimal periodontal attachments by hand and without the use of an elevator under direct or immediate supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>The following treatments may be performed to an equid by a licensed equine dental provider under general supervision by a veterinarian, and by a non-veterinarian employee under direct supervision by the veterinarian:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removing sharp enamel points;</li> <li>2. Removing small dental overgrowths;</li> <li>3. Rostral profiling of the first cheek teeth;</li> <li>4. Reducing incisors;</li> <li>5. Extracting loose, deciduous teeth;</li> <li>6. Removing supragingival calculus;</li> <li>7. Extracting loose, mobile, or diseased teeth or dental fragments with minimal periodontal attachments by hand and without the use of an elevator; and</li> <li>8. Removing erupted, non-displaced wolf teeth.</li> </ol> <p>Nothing in this regulation shall prohibit any person from utilizing cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, or toothbrushes to clean an animal's teeth.</p>
Utah	<p>VT activities require direct veterinary supervision. The following activities are prohibited: diagnosis, prognosis, surgery or prescription of drugs, medicines, or appliances.</p> <p>Any individual may perform teeth floating if he or she:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has a valid certification from the International Association of Equine Dentistry, or an equivalent certification designated by division rule made in collaboration with the board, to perform teeth floating; and</li> <li>2. Administers or uses a sedative drug only if the individual is under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.</li> </ol>

	<p>"Teeth floating" means the removal of enamel points and the smoothing, contouring, and leveling of dental arcades and incisors of equine and other farm animals. "Teeth floating" does not include a dental procedure on a canine or feline.</p>
Vermont	<p>Performing dental procedures on an animal is considered the practice of veterinary medicine. However, dental operation does not mean the use by any person of cotton swabs, gauze, dental floss, dentifrice, toothbrushes, or similar items to clean an animal's teeth.</p> <p>Non-veterinarians may perform the floating of equine teeth, but may not use power-assisted filing or power-assisted floating, extract teeth, or perform other procedures that invade the soft tissue of the mouth.</p>
Virginia	<p>VTs may perform dental polishing and teeth scaling above the gum line (supragingival) under the immediate and direct supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>VT are prohibited from performing surgery, diagnosing, or prescribing medication for any animal. However, 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.</p> <p>A licensed veterinary technician may planning or leveling equine teeth for routine dental maintenance under the immediate and direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, provided the licensed veterinary technician has graduated from an American Veterinary Medical Association accredited program with successful completion of coursework in equine dentistry or can document training comparable to that of an equine dental technician.</p>
Washington	<p>A VT may perform dental extractions only under the immediate supervision of a veterinarian.</p> <p>Direct supervision is required for teeth cleaning, provided an oral examination of the anesthetized patient has been conducted by the veterinarian and for floating teeth.</p>
West Virginia	<p>A VT may perform dental prophylaxis under general supervision.</p> <p>All dental procedures shall be carried out by a veterinarian, technician or veterinary assistant under the general supervision of a veterinarian. VTs shall not perform surgery, make diagnoses, or prescribe medications.</p>
Wisconsin	<p>A veterinarian may delegate dental prophylaxis and simple extractions that require minor manipulation and minimal elevation to CVT under direct supervision.</p> <p>VTs may not perform the following: diagnosis and prognosis of animal diseases and conditions; prescribing of drugs, medicines, treatments, and appliances or performing surgery.</p>
Wyoming	<p>VTs may not perform the following: surgery, diagnosis and prognosis or prescription of drugs, medicines and appliances. A veterinarian delegating tasks must ensure that the activities of a supervised individual are within the scope of the orders, assignment or prescriptions of the licensee and within the capabilities of the individual.</p>

**Source:** Staff research, AVMA State Advocacy Division  
**Contact:** State Policy Analyst, AVMA State Advocacy Division