COMMENTS by WJD 07.03.14

Re: Resolution 6-2014 Revised Policy on Veterinary Dentistry

Dear Delegate –

As President of the AHVMA, I would like to comment on the Revised Policy on Veterinary Dentistry.

The AHVMA does not support this amendment and in particular questions the ~~accuracy~~ veracity and implications of these sections:

* ***When procedures such as periodontal probing, intraoral radiography, dental scaling, and dental extraction are justified by the oral examination, they should be performed under anesthesia.***
* ***Visual or radiographic recognition of oral or dental pathology and accurate assessment of periodontal health by probing of pockets require sedation or anesthesia.***

Veterinary dentistry, like all modalities of veterinary medicine, depends on our training and judgment as we offer treatments to improve the patient’s health. Every treatment we offer should be in the best interests of the health of each patient. Policies that limit the ability of ~~the~~ veterinarians to use their best judgment in treating an animal will not ~~improve the standing of~~ [how about “benefit”] our profession nor our patients’ health and well-being. There is a growing body of evidence that supports the use of non-anesthesia dentistry in select cases.

One study by University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine compares non-anesthetic dental scaling with anesthetic scaling. It showed that when veterinarians carefully select appropriate patients for each procedure, the two procedures were equivalent. Another study is currently underway, and others will surely follow as the controversy continues. It is clearly sensible to gather the growing body of evidence about these procedures rather than stepping in with policies that question a veterinarian’s ability to practice how he or she chooses.

Veterinarians are well educated and able to decide when an animal needs anesthesia for *any* procedure. We can use our skills in examination to determine when the risks of anesthesia may ~~not~~ be ~~necessary~~ unwarranted or in fact might be contraindicated. Our patients are our responsibility and we take that responsibility very seriously.

The relationship of the AVMA to veterinarians ~~is not to micromanage~~ should not be to second guess our daily practices or our cases. We look to the AVMA as a champion of all veterinarians, supporting and encouraging our strong and independent profession.

Making statements about what is “Standard of Care” in the face of a growing body of contradictory evidence only fosters confusion and fear of reprisal, as we try to balance the many conditions and health problems of our patients. Please let veterinarians decide on the best course for their patients, and let the evidence prove that these procedures can be sensible and helpful for our patients.

Thank you,

Barbara Royal, DVM, President AHVMA

Board?