

Sedating for non-veterinary procedures

The issue of where a vet's responsibility starts and stops in relation to the prescription and/or administration of sedation for non-veterinary procedures (e.g. clipping, farriery, EDT care, etc.) causes significant concern.

This guidance has been developed in conversation with the RCVS and VDS* to help equine vets understand what they are responsible for, and what they are not responsible for.

At a very basic level, when an equine vet is asked to provide sedation, they should be satisfied that the prescription and administration of sedation is appropriate for the situation. The points below should be considered to help the vet determine whether or not that is the case.

“Everyone is responsible for their own actions. Ours is to act reasonably and make good choices.”

The vet's responsibility

When asked to provide sedation (administered by any route, e.g. oral, intravenous), it is the veterinary surgeon's responsibility to:

- Request appropriate information with regards to the requirement for sedation, i.e. ask the owner/keeper what procedure is being carried out, and by who.
- Where relevant, remind the owner that they should use appropriately qualified individuals, e.g. the equine dental technician (EDT) is on the BAEDT/WWAED register, or the farrier is registered with the Farriers Registration Council (FRC).
- Prescribe or administer an appropriate sedation, at an appropriate dose, with appropriate instructions for administration (where left for owner to administer orally) and aftercare instructions.
- Inform the owner that only they or their employees may administer the prescribed sedation.
- Intervene appropriately if, whilst she/he is present it becomes evident that the animal's welfare is being compromised, or an illegal act is taking place.
- Remain on site (if administering the sedation) until they are satisfied that the animal is stable under sedation.
- Advise the owner to seek veterinary advice/attention should the animal's condition become a concern.

Not the vet's responsibility

The following are not the responsibility of the vet:

- The accuracy of the information relayed by the owner to the vet.
- The actions of the allied professional when not under direct and continuous supervision.
- The vet is not required to remain on site to supervise/oversee/be present whilst the sedation and any procedures take place. The only exception to this is sedating a horse for an accredited equine dental technician (EDT) to remove 'wolf teeth', for which continuous supervision is recommended.

* Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) guidance available [here](#).