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## **VVMA Position Statement**

### **Horse Tail Alteration**

**Adopted by the VVMA Executive Board February 3, 2023**

The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) is opposed to the surgical or chemical alteration of the tail of the horse for cosmetic or competitive purposes. This includes the practices of docking, nicking, and blocking the tail of a horse. Tail docking in horses should only be performed when it is a medical necessity and should be performed by a licensed veterinarian to ensure adequate pain management, sterile technique and appropriate aftercare.

#### Background:

Tail docking is the surgical procedure in which a horse's tail is cut between the vertebrae, resulting in a shortened tail. Tail blocking refers to the procedure where the nervous supply to the tail is injected, or chemically altered, to create a quieter tail in the show ring. Tail nicking involves cutting the horse's tail tendons to create an artificially higher carriage.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) condemns the alteration of the tail of the horse for cosmetic or competitive purposes, and the AVMA supports AAEP's position.

AVMA summarizes state laws regulating tail alteration and other cosmetic procedures

<https://www.avma.org/advocacy/state-local-issues/state-laws-governing-elective-surgical-procedures>

CVMA (Canada) Position Statement on Elective and non-therapeutic procedures

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/elective-and-non-therapeutic-veterinary-procedures-for-cosmetic-or-competitive-purposes-formerly-cosmetic-alteration/>

AAEP Position Statement on Tail Alteration:

<https://aaep.org/position-tail-alteration-horses>

#### AQHA Ruling on Tail Blocking:

All horses are subject to drug and tail testing under the provisions of Rule 441 (h) of the AQHA Official Handbook, which states: For the purpose of this rule, normal tail function is defined as "being able to raise the tail to or above the horizontal plane." A horse's inability to raise its tail to or above the horizontal plane in response to a tail test conducted on site by an AQHA-approved veterinarian shall be considered a violation of this rule.