

Veterinary Clinical Specialists in Equine Practice. Does it Matter?

You may have heard veterinarians use the words “diplomate”, “board certified” or “specialist”. Or you may have read initials such as DACVIM, DACT or DACVS behind their names. What do they mean to you? Why does working with a board certified veterinarian matter?

Because specialists meet nationally recognized standards for expertise in their field, they provide the trustworthy superior quality care you and your horse need.

When you choose a veterinarian, it is important you find someone who will be a valued partner in your horse’s care. Whether you are seeking health care for a pet or a performance horse, you want to partner with someone you can trust, communicate with and count on quality patient care. Because board certified clinicians meet nationally recognized standards for knowledge and expertise in their field, they provide the trustworthy superior quality care you and your horse need.

A veterinary license demonstrates veterinarians have the minimum competency requirements to diagnose and treat basic conditions. However, it is not specialty specific. Board certification demonstrates a veterinarian has acquired expertise in a particular clinical specialty through additional years of post-graduate training. Veterinary specialty board certification is voluntary, only a minority of veterinarians seeks this process.

To become a specialist, veterinarians complete a 2- to 3-year training program, after which they take a certifying examination. This examination lasts 2 or 3 days and is administered by specialty colleges, which must be recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Currently, there are 22 AVMA-recognized veterinary specialty colleges (https://www.avma.org/ProfessionalDevelopment/Education/Specialties/Pages/recognized-veterinary-specialty-organizations_all.aspx).

Veterinarians that complete their training and pass the certifying examination are granted “diplomate” or “board certified” status. Only those awarded diplomate or board certified status from an AVMA-recognized specialty college can legally claim to be specialists. Having a special interest or a focused practice in a given field does not qualify an individual as a specialist. Board certification protects horse owners and breeders by certifying that the veterinarian they are trusting as a specialist has indeed proven expertise and competence in the chosen field.

Only diplomates from an AVMA-recognized specialty college can legally claim to be specialists. Board certification ensures that the veterinarian has indeed proven competence in that field.

Board certified clinicians deliver high quality care in a cost efficient manner and with superior clinical outcomes. Veterinary specialists offer services, knowledge, and skills beyond that offered by veterinarians. Your veterinarian can consult board certified clinicians on a case or refer the case to them when the condition requires specialized care. In addition, at the Veterinary Health Center primary care is also provided by board certified clinicians. Our specialty services are readily available to clients, who can call in for appointments without the need for referral if they don’t have an established relationship with a local veterinarian or need a second opinion.

Board certified clinicians deliver cost efficient, high quality care with superior clinical outcomes.



Photo: Martin Schmelze

The Equine Section at the Veterinary Health Center of Kansas State University counts with an outstanding team of specialists that can provide care in all aspects of equine health and management. Our clinicians have a commitment to excellence, humane patient care, client education, effective communication and ethics. You can find more information about the Equine Section in our website: <http://www.vet.k-state.edu/depts/VHC/equine/index.htm>.

Meet the specialists at the Veterinary Health Center of Kansas State University

Specialty	Initials	Description	Our specialists
Internal medicine	DACVIM	Evaluates problems with the respiratory, gastrointestinal, nervous system, muscles, internal organs and neonatal foals.	Laurie Beard Elizabeth Davis Bonnie Rush
Surgery	DACVS	Evaluates horses with lameness, bone and joint disorders, colic, wounds, and airway disease.	Warren Beard
Theriogenology	DACT	Evaluates infertility, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, semen freezing, reproductive and behavioral problems in mares or stallions.	Maria Ferrer
Ophthalmology	DACVO	Evaluates horses with problems of the eye and surrounding structures	Amy Rankin Jessica Slack

So, does working with a veterinary clinical specialist matter? You bet! Efficient health care improves not only clinical and economic outcomes, but also your horse's welfare by minimizing medical interventions and alleviating their ailments in a timely manner. In the end, it matters that your horse receives appropriate health care from experienced specialists. It matters that you can partner with a team of specialists you can trust, that is receptive and attentive to your needs as a horse owner, breeder or trainer, and that cares about you and your horses. The clinicians, house officers and technicians at the Veterinary Health Center of Kansas State University look forward to being part of your horse's health care team.

