ETHICS AND JURISPRUDENCE IN EQUINE VETERINARY PRACTICE
Jeffrey T. Berk, VMD, MRCVS

Ethics in equine veterinary practice, just like ethics in every other aspect of life, is not an "add on" to be superimposed upon a veterinarian's already existing professional life. Ethics is foundational, and all behaviors spring from the presence or lack of ethics. This topic will be presented in the form of a panel discussion, the panelists composed of:

- Jeffrey Berk, an equine veterinary practitioner in Lexington KY
- Mike Meuser, an attorney specializing in equine law who frequently litigates cases involving veterinarians
- Mike Casey, an attorney who frequently represents veterinarians for the AVMA Professional Liability Insurance Trust

Dr. Berk will discuss the following topics related to veterinary ethics in equine practice:

The inherent conflict between being a health care provider and running a business to maximize profit.

Your job... To provide excellent service without incurring unnecessary expense to the client.

Ethical behavior: is it an "add on" or is it foundational to the business of equine veterinary medicine?

How can I practice ethical equine veterinary medicine in the context of:
- Pressure from clients to perform unethical procedures
- Pressure from my employer to cater to client wishes regardless of the ethics

The difference between "ethical" and "legal"

AVMA Code of Ethics
AAEP Code of Ethics

Why are ethics a particular problem in equine medicine?
- Performance issues (winning at all costs)

The cost to the veterinary community resulting from unethical veterinary practices (loss of standing in the community, diminishing collegiality)

Is it possible to be competitive in business while behaving ethically?

Why do people behave unethically?
- Some are dishonest by nature
- Some fear the potentially negative consequences of ethical behavior

All equine veterinarians are confronted with an ethical "fork in the road" at some point in their career.
Every equine veterinarian, after practicing for a period of time, ends up with the clients they deserve. (ie. the clients that their ethics are compatible with)

The panel will present and discuss multiple scenarios that would typically be encountered by veterinarians in equine practice, including:

- Pre-purchase examination
- Racetrack (trainer-initiated treatment)
- Compounded medication
- Radiographic reports at public auction

The panel will also present and discuss:

- Administrative consequences to unethical veterinary practices
- Legal consequences to unethical veterinary practices

This session will be interactive, so there will be time for questions during and after the presentation.