

## **New York's New Equine Therapy Regs Are Counterproductive**

*At a time when the thoroughbred industry needs to move to reduce medications, limiting the use of alternative, non-drug therapies is the wrong approach*

In recent years, top trainers and veterinarians across the country have increasingly embraced alternative therapies as a way of maintaining musculoskeletal health in horses. Modalities like cold lasers, cold water spa, massage, chiropractics, acupuncture, magnetic blankets and pulsed electromagnetic field therapies (PEMF) have gained prominence at the track.

PEMF has won over devotees because it is non-invasive and has no side effects. The therapy provides a supplemental form of treatment for various injuries sustained by the equine athlete. The technology sends low-intensity, low-frequency electromagnetic pulses into the body, which stimulate cellular flexibility, increasing blood flow and tissue oxygenation. Inflammation is reduced, which promotes healing.

Licensed equine therapists have been using PEMF for over a decade with good results. Many leading New York owners, trainers and vets believe in PEMF and trust and rely on the experienced PEMF practitioners who bring a wealth of knowledge and a great deal of care to the horses.

All of this changed in December of 2018, when a licensed equine therapist was denied NYRA credentials. Suddenly, New York became the first state in the country to require PEMF treatments be administered by vets or vet techs-only.

This was premised on PEMF being considered a veterinary modality. That's simply not the case. In my professional experience, I have never seen PEMF practitioners making diagnoses. They rely instead on the direction of veterinarians and trainers for the guidance in treatment. Nor should anyone consider PEMF therapies directly analgesic, but rather as anti-inflammatory in action.

PEMF practitioners are providing a worthy service in the same manner as do lay equine dentists. Vets like myself do not have the interest nor the time to provide such a service.

These practitioners have invested thousands of hours in real, practical training and continuing education for the betterment of animal welfare. This therapy is best left to those who can devote the time, energy and resources to applying the regular treatment schedules that many trainers and owners request for their horses.

Alternative therapies play an important role alongside traditional veterinary medicine. Yes, invasive procedures are necessary, but if there are other worthy non-invasive modalities available, good New York horsemen ought to embrace them, not limit them. It's even more important to implement such forms of therapies because they can help prevent injury.

The New York State Board of Veterinary Medicine, the New York Gaming Commission and state stewards should all work together to better align with other jurisdictions by eliminating this ill-conceived regulation. For the future of the sport, we should champion more non-prescription alternative therapies, not less. That is why I support New York State Senate Bill S6269/New York State Assembly Bill A7899.

Sincerely,



Dr. James C. Hunt

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