

Working for you: Professional Conduct & Ethics Committee

By Kathleen Anderson, DVM

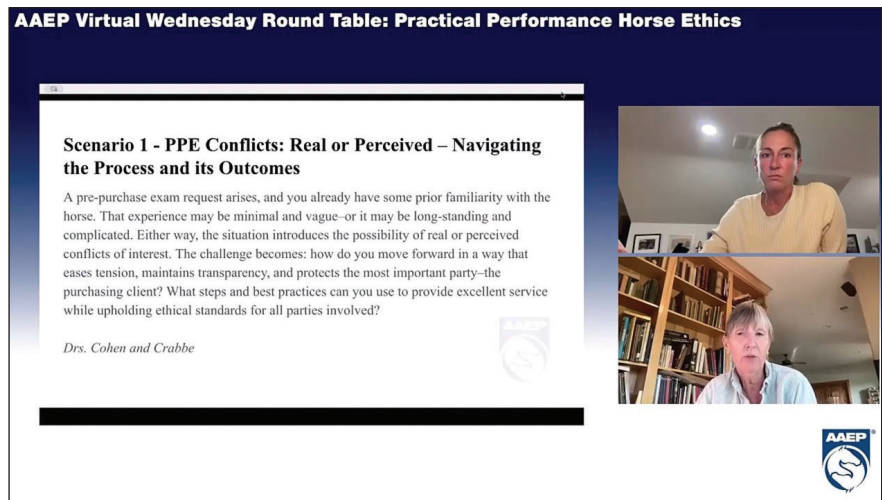
Composed of 16 members from academic, industry and practitioner backgrounds, the AAEP's Professional Conduct and Ethics Committee (PCEC) meets regularly via Zoom to brainstorm emerging topics of interest and concern for our members.

The charge of the PCEC is to review and analyze ethical issues facing the AAEP membership and to educate the membership on these issues through resource development and programming; to evaluate complaints of unethical practice against AAEP members; and to recommend disciplinary action to the board regarding membership privileges.

Due to the overarching reach of ethics and professional conduct on all aspects of AAEP members' lives, our committee definitely does not work in a vacuum; we often work in tandem with other committees, including the Performance Horse Committee, Early Career Committee and Horse Owner Education Committee.

Ongoing education work of the PCEC includes:

- Publishing member education ethics articles in *Equine Veterinary Education*
- Presenting ethics case scenarios in the Spur e-newsletter
- Hosting occasional Virtual Wednesday Round Table webinars
- Coordinating the early morning ethics session at the AAEP Annual Convention
- Integrating the AAEP's Equine Addendum to the AVMA's Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics (aaep.org/resource/aaep-principles-of-veterinary-medical-ethics-equine-addendum) into



The PCEC collaborated with the Performance Horse and Early Career committees in September 2025 for a Virtual Wednesday Round Table on practical performance horse ethics tailored for early career veterinarians.

AAEP continuing education and member behaviors. Understanding of the pillars of equine ethics is essential to equine practitioners and our social license to operate.

Additionally, the PCEC regularly reviews and updates the AAEP Board on guidance documents through the lens of ethics. Recent examples are the Position Statement on the Use of Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy and an impending Position Statement on Animal Devices in Equine Practice. The collective experience and perspectives of our group provide an excellent microcosm of the AAEP membership at large, thereby serving to provide guidance to both veteran and early career practitioners.

As described by AAEP Executive Director David Foley in the October 2025 issue of *EVE* (aaep.org/post/ethics-demystifying-the-aaeps-ethical-process), the role of evaluating complaints of unethical behavior by AAEP members is also critical to maintaining the integrity and respect

of our members in the profession and various disciplines. The complaints are evaluated confidentially with confirmed facts from both parties (complainant and respondent) to determine a recommendation to the AAEP Board for action regarding membership privileges. In these deliberations, the committee strives for fairness and expediency, and all members are accorded respect and consideration from the PCEC.

Emerging topics will always loom on the horizon; for example, the use of artificial intelligence in equine practice, the impact of new assisted reproductive technologies or, most recently, the unintended consequences of the off-label use of medical devices. The PCEC commits to understanding and anticipating how to effectively manage the changing world in which we live and work by providing education and resources to our members.

Dr. Anderson is the chair of the AAEP's Professional Conduct and Ethics Committee.