

FATAL ALERT

January 26, 2008

A Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) was fatally injured, while working in his veterinary office, as a result of his femoral artery being severed. The DVM was performing a necropsy on a dead horse to determine the cause of death. The deceased had been working earlier the same day attempting to treat the horse for an intestinal problem, but either the horse died during the treatment or was purposely put down by the deceased. The deceased was working alone at the time of the accident with no assistance or eyewitnesses. It appears that the exam was to include the removal of the intestinal tract, as the belly or stomach of the dead animal was cut from the xyphoid process (sternum) of the horse down towards the groin area with a knife. The knife was a large hunting-type knife, not a surgical knife, and at some point the blade came unexpectedly through the animal's hide. Due to the amount of force the deceased was applying to the knife, he was apparently unable to stop it before it struck his leg. The wound cut both the femoral artery and the main vein in the right leg.

The deceased was an experienced veterinarian and been practicing for many years and was very experienced in this particular procedure.

Significant Factors:

- Deceased was working in a large animal exam room, indoors, when he cut himself in the right leg severing the femoral artery.
- The investigation was able to determine that the deceased probably became unconscious within only a few seconds of the injury and died within minutes of the accident.

Recommendations:

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Brief/retrain all employees on the danger of working around sharp instruments that can injure employees.
- Recommend that all employees using sharp cutting tools/devices wear cut resistance protective devices on body locations that are identified as high risk areas.
- When at all possible, work in pairs or with an assistant, so in the event of unforeseen emergency first responders can be expeditiously notified.
- Recommend that all employees using sharp cutting tools/devices be trained in the ability to be aware of safe body positional procedures and alternative measures.