

# Veterinary Internship with Paragon Equine Veterinary Services

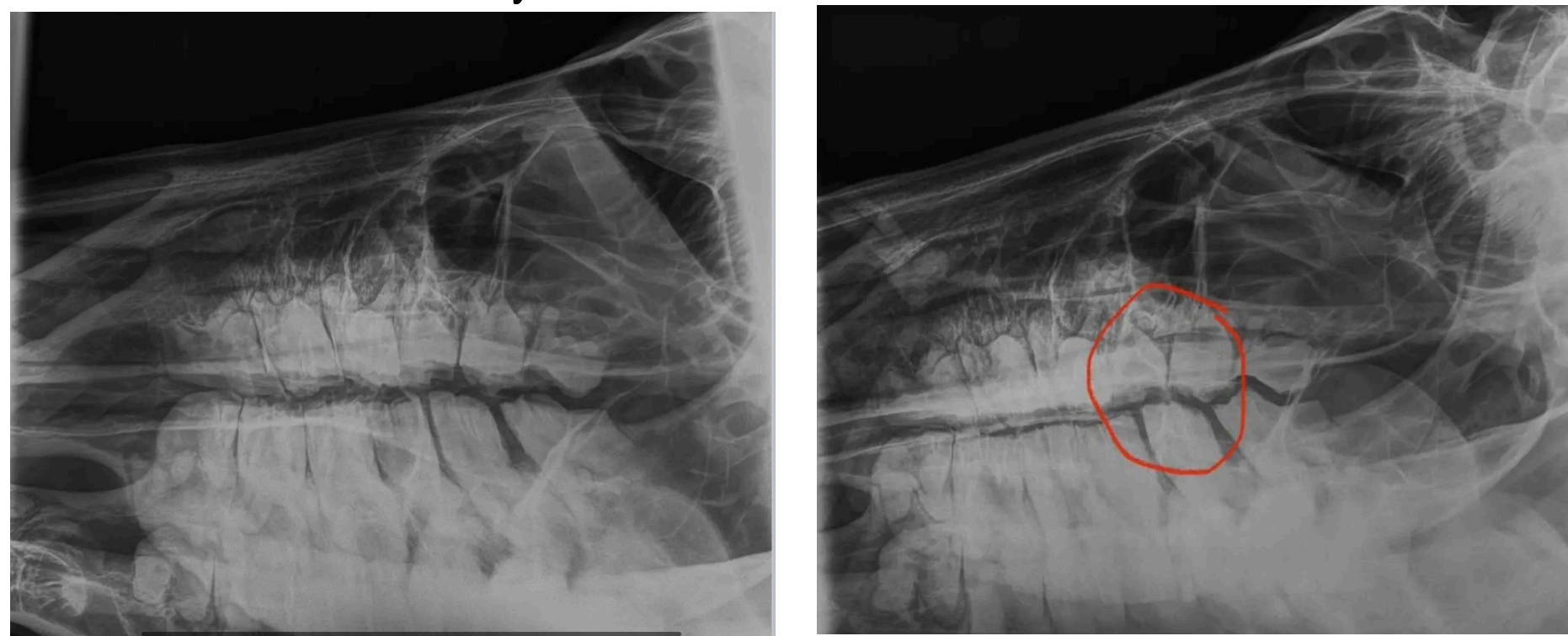
Suzanne Tunder

## Overview

Within the profession of veterinary medicine, there are many different roles to be played. The primary role is that of the veterinarian which is the doctor who tends to the patient's medical care and treatment needs. Typically, the veterinarian is surrounded by support staff such as veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants, receptionists, and other personnel to be able to run at the most efficient level.

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern with Paragon Equine Veterinary Services as a veterinary assistant. This experience gave me the insight as to how the role of a veterinary assistant is critical for the patient, the owner of the patient, and for the veterinarian.

As a new practice, opening March of 2022, there was only two veterinarians and a practice manager. When joining their team for my internship, they remarked on how it would be completely new to them to have their own veterinary assistant.



Radiographic imaging of a patient with a sinus infection due to a tooth root infection. The teeth were floated to prevent pressure (area circled in red)

## What a Veterinary Assistant Does:

An equine veterinary assistant helps to perform many tasks such as:

- Aids in the restraint, holding, and movement of the equine patient
- Helps to collect samples from the patient
  - Blood, urine, fecal, cultures, skin scrapes and swabs
- Helps to perform radiograph imaging
- Helping to sedate the patient, monitor while sedated, and monitor for recovery
- Helping to inject medications or drugs
- Helping to gather equipment, medications/drugs, instruments, and other items to be used for the appointment or procedure
- Help with invoicing and billing clients
- Helping to record a patient's medical history in the records system

## Paragon Equine: Ambulatory Practice

Initially, I had believed Paragon Equine to be a practice established at a physical location, such as at a facility. When setting up my internship, I learned that they are an ambulatory practice.

An ambulatory practice is a practice which has no physical location for their facility. Instead, they perform surgical procedures and examinations at the owner's property or on the property that the animal is housed (such as a boarding barn or facility). For extreme cases, the animals may be sent to a neighboring facility that has a physical practice location.

Pro's of having an ambulatory practice:

- Emergency coverage – moving a large animal in distress, pain, or in critical condition may make having an ambulatory veterinarian more desirable
- Familiarity – both the owner and the animal are familiar with the area they are in
- Convenience – for the owner, there is the convenience of not having to load up their animal to transport to a facility for medical care

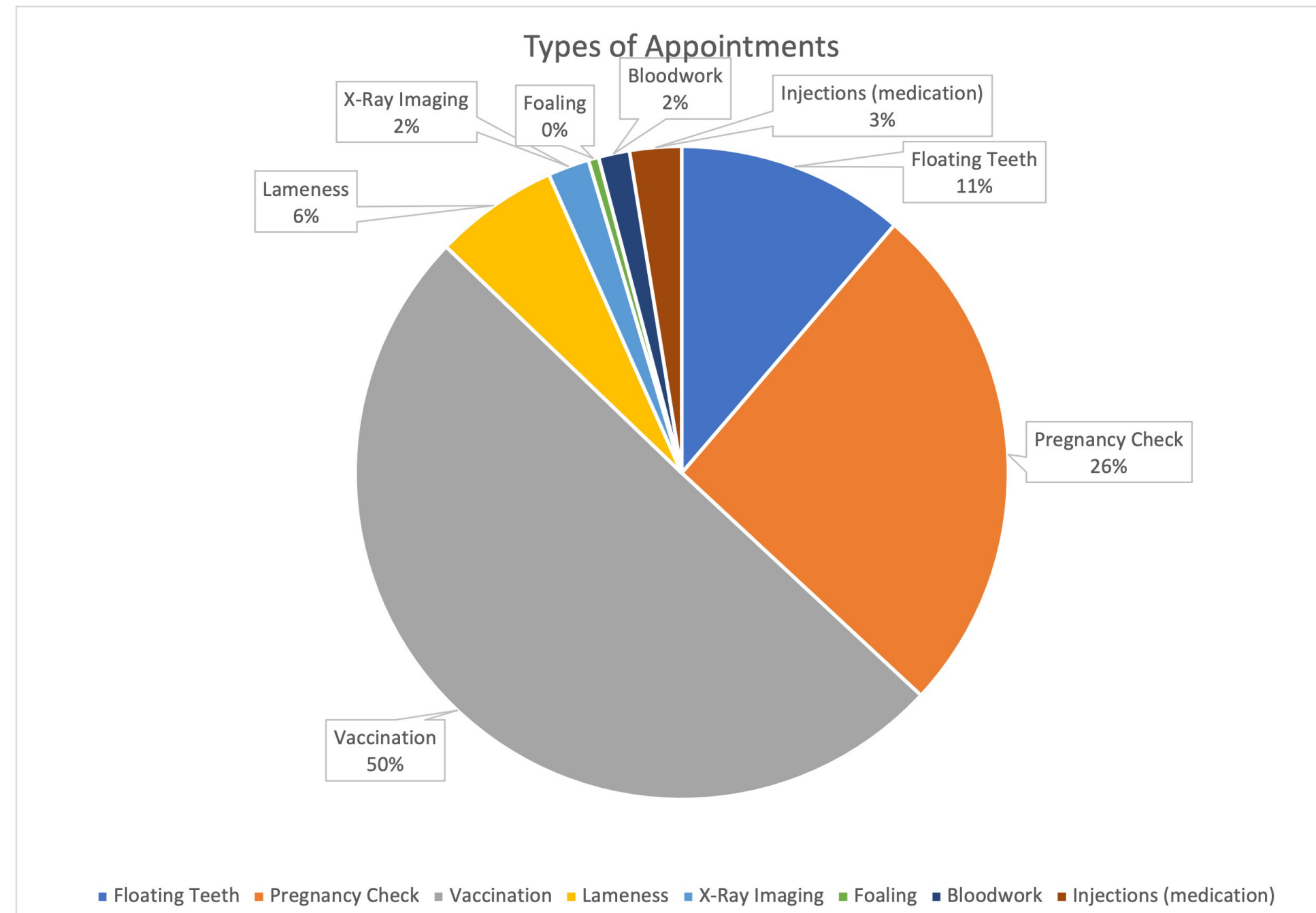
Con's of having an ambulatory practice

- Having to bring supplies, equipment, medicine/drugs, etc
- A lack of sterility or adequate space – some barns are not equipped for surgical procedures
- Having to work in the conditions (ex. Extreme heat, rain/shine, dropping winter temperatures, etc)

## The Experience

The experience of interning as a veterinary assistant offered a broader insight to the world of equine medicine and how a veterinary assistant can best assist a veterinarian and a practice.

With being the practice's first veterinary assistant, the veterinarians had to adjust to having extra help for examinations and procedures. Once beginning to work more in the practice, I became involved in many interesting case types such as pre-purchase examinations, examination for OCD (Osteochondritis dissecans), dental procedures such as floating teeth, and much more.

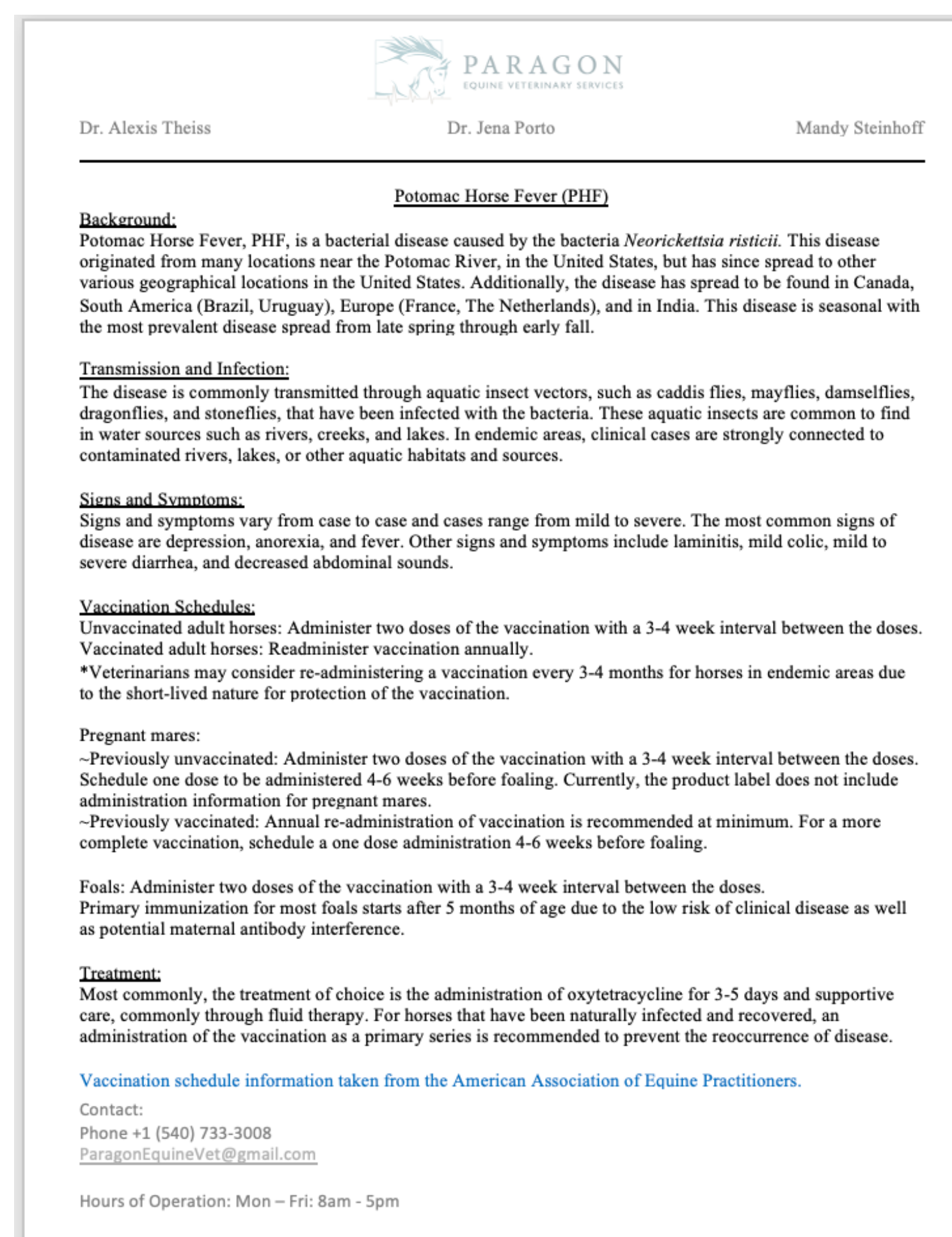


## Potomac Horse Fever

During my experience, there was a local outbreak of Potomac Horse Fever, which caused the death of a three-year-old equine animal and severe sickness in other animals.

Due to the increased risk and increased severity of symptoms, many owners opted to vaccinate their animal for Potomac Horse Fever. With the dramatic increase and desire for vaccinations, more of the vaccine had to be ordered and vaccination appointments had to be squeezed into days that were already fully booked. Additionally, to increase awareness and information about the disease, I made a client information handout (shown below).

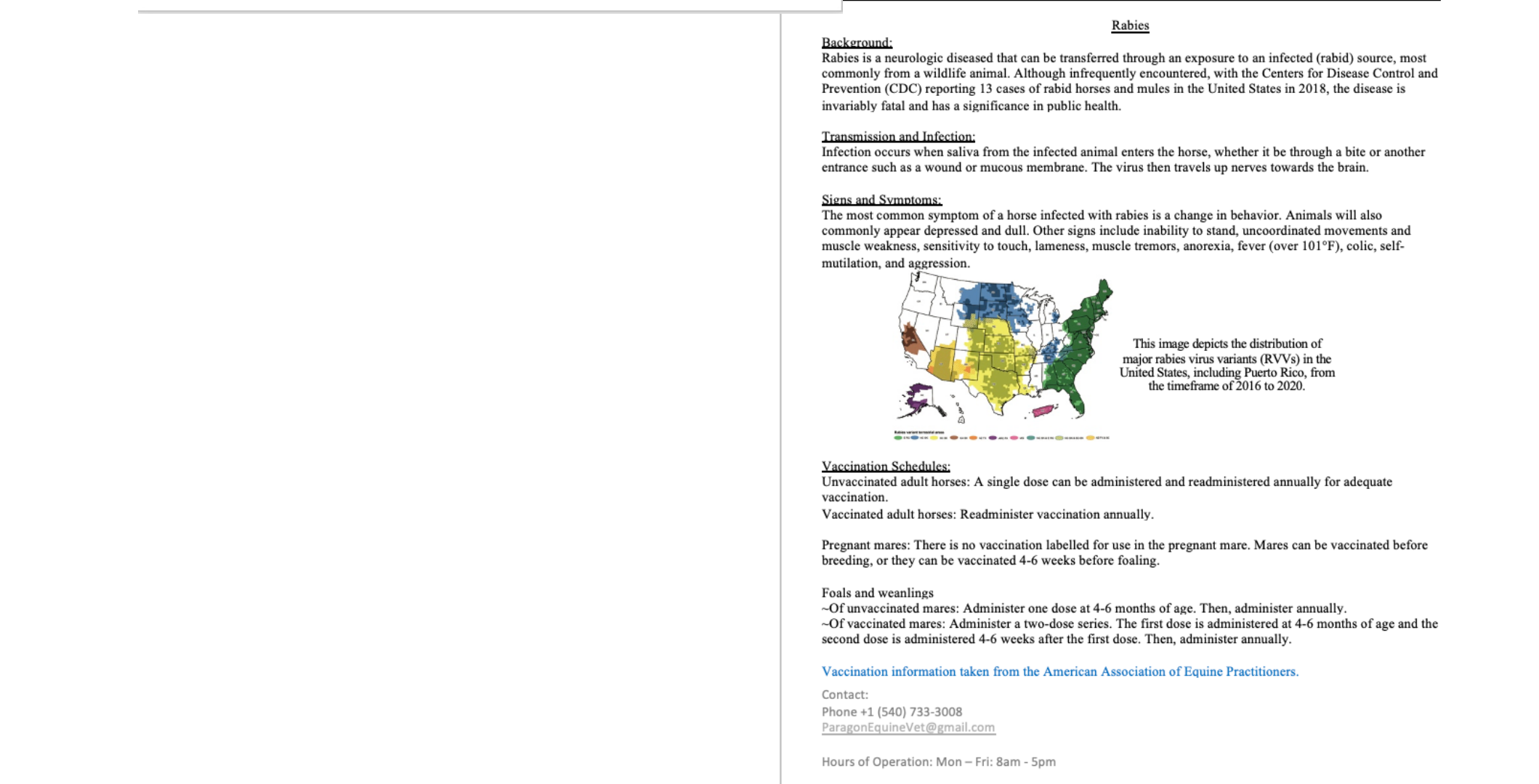
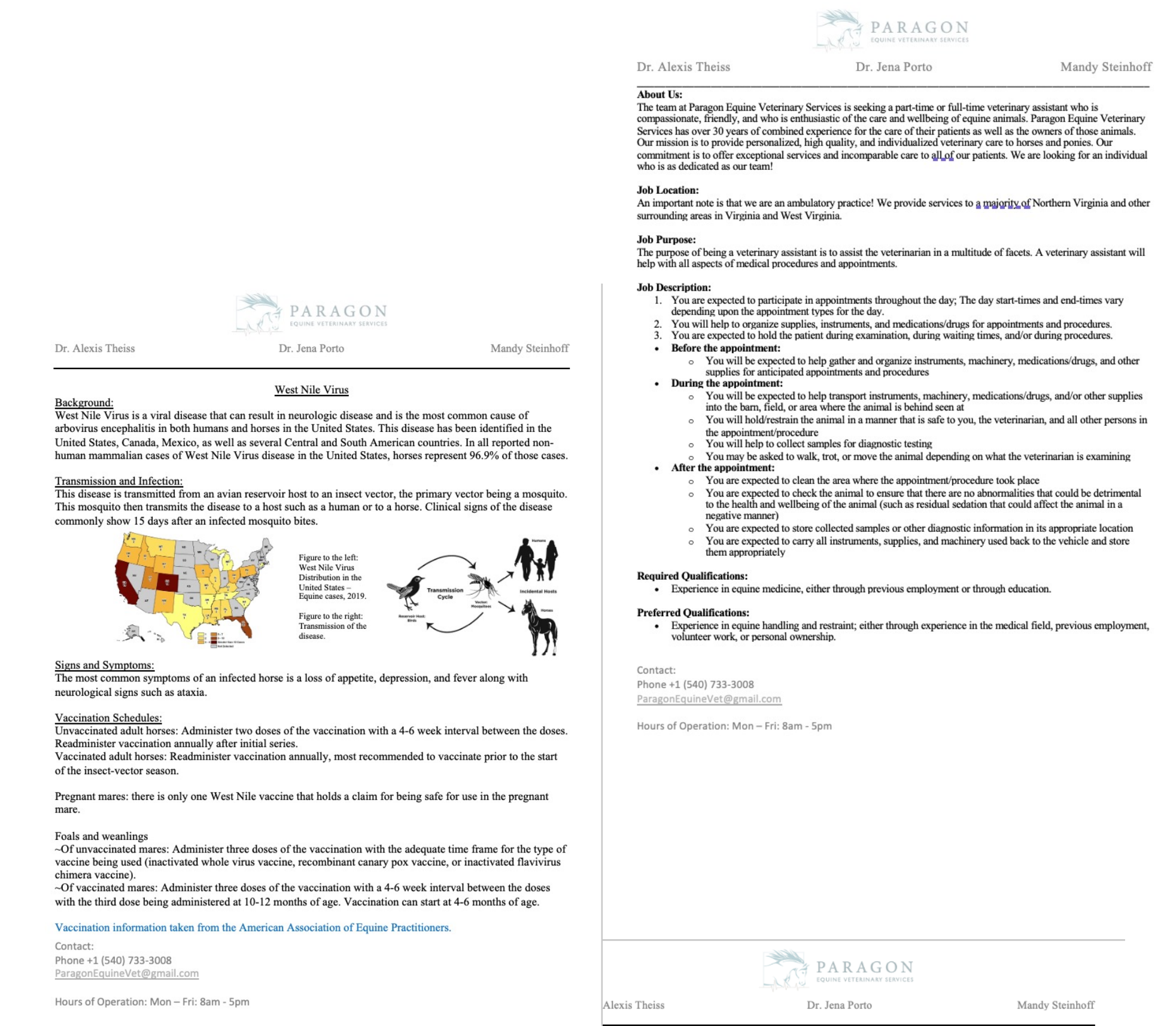
Unfortunately, the vaccine is not as effective as most veterinarians would hope. The vaccine offers protection for about three months and many animals, especially those in high-risk areas, must be revaccinated.



## The Project

When starting my internship with Paragon Equine, there was no guidelines for how a veterinary assistant can best aid the practice. Ideas for a Capstone Project included creating more of a social media presence, creating informational brochures for clients, creating a S.O.P., and more.

What was decided on was to create a job description for future veterinary assistant as well as client informational handouts. I had also helped to create social media posts for the practice to increase client outreach.



Top Right: Job description for future veterinary assistants  
Middle Left: An informational handout on West Nile Virus in equines  
Bottom Right: An informational handout on Rabies in equines



Image (Left): Dr. Porto, me, Rebecca (barn manager), and Mandy (left to right) after the completion of full body radiographic imaging  
Image (Right): Instruments used for Prepurchase Examinations

## Contact information

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Please contact me if you have any further questions or inquires!