Equine Good Citizen Test
Devin Wynne
Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Center for One Health Research (COHR)
1410 Prices Fork, Blacksburg, Virginia, 24060

Overview

Animal Care for Education (ACE) is a subunit of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine that is based out of both Phase IV of the vet school as well as COHR, Center for One Health Research. For the purpose of my experience, I will only be discussing my role at COHR. This subunit is responsible for caring for the teaching animals used by the veterinary students which includes horses, dogs, and dairy cattle. Using these animals allows students to gain hands-on experience and learn outside of the typical classroom setting. My responsibilities as an Animal Care Technician will provide me with experience in the following fields: Farm management, Animal Welfare, Animal Behavior, Animal Medicine, and Communication.

The Experience

In August of 2021, I found the opportunity to be employed with TRACCS, which later became ACE and ARC-D. One focused on teaching animals where the other focused on research animals. I was chosen to be on the ACE team which led me to produce this project to complete over my summertime employment.

It is my responsibility along with several other Student Wage Employees as Animal Care Technicians to ensure the welfare and well-being of the teaching animals. This includes duties such as; feeding appropriate proportions, applying topical medication, administering oral daily medications for chronic or acute conditions, communicating issues that arise with my direct supervisor as well as Equine Field Services, holding for farrier appointments, and field management (Bush hogging, fence replacement, automatic water maintenance)

A typical day at work:
- Arriving at 7:00 am each morning, the team congregates in building 445 to discuss tasks for the day and delegate responsibilities
- The team splits up and begins morning rounds:
  - This is where each horse is groomed, checked for any new or reoccurring issues, fed, daily medication is administered, and any issues are noted and reported back to the supervisor
  - This is completed in each field as well as at the secondary pasture space, Glade.
- Following this the team discusses other plans such as field management and begins fixing fences, mowing, etc
- A break for lunch is taken around 12:30 pm
- After lunch evening rounds are completed
  - Each horse is counted
  - Reapply and Administer medications if needed
  - Feed a second serving to one of the older members of the herd
  - Lock the gates

Capstone Goals

1. Research and analyze information in reference to positive reinforcement in horses and how to make it the most effective
2. Based on the qualifications to receive the Canine Good Citizen Test (CGC), create a criteria for horses that reaches the same goals
3. Expand communication with my direct supervisor and veterinarians regarding the behavioral issues seen with the herd as well as if they are correlated with medical issues
4. Gain hands on experience working with horses and their behavior that will later serve as experience for my post-graduate plans.
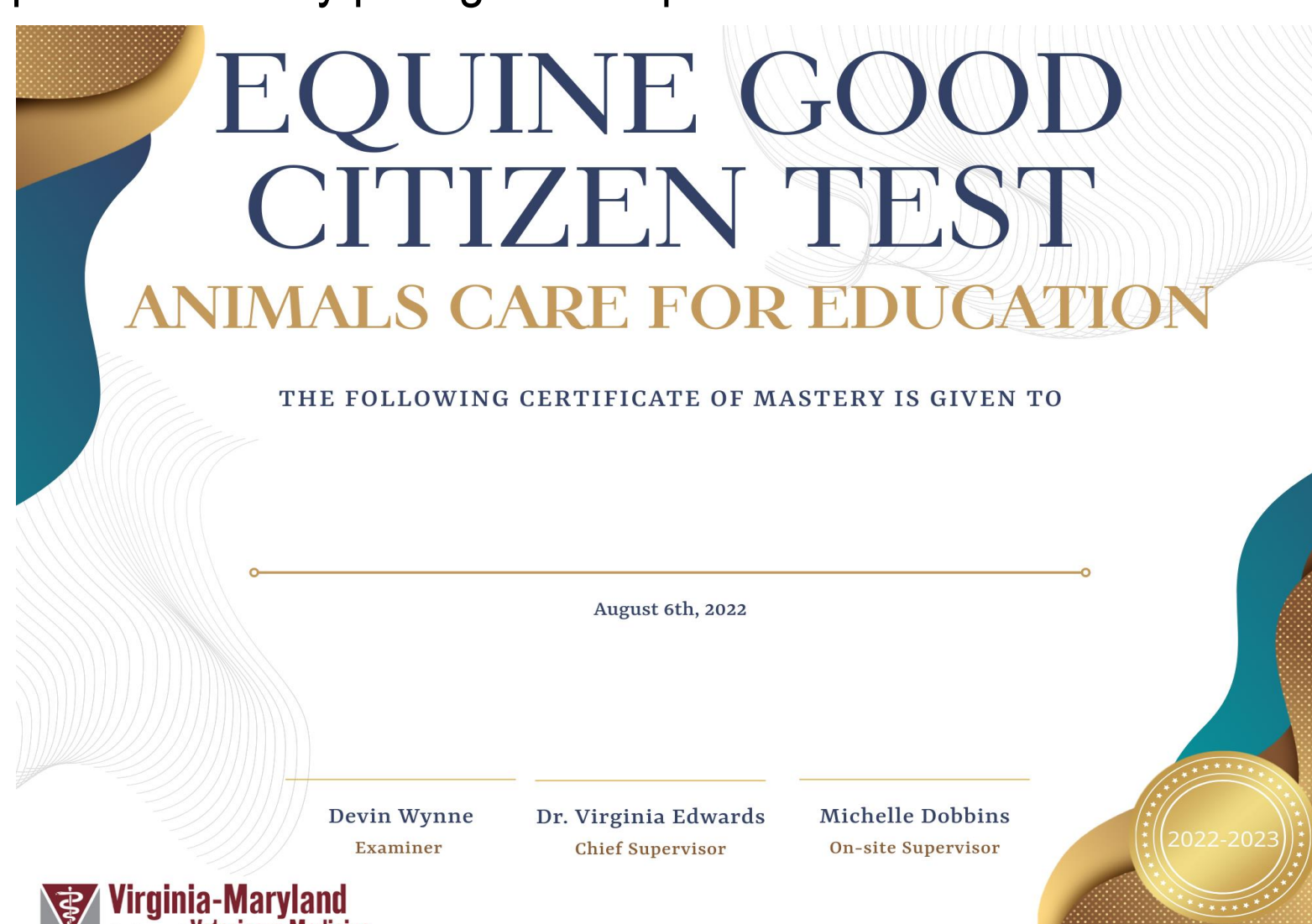
The Project

My experience was centered around creating a test for the equine teaching herd used by the veterinary students at VMCOVM that ensures that they are safe to be handled by students with ranging experience during their various handling labs. This stemmed from the concern as an employee that several members of the herd were hard to handle for even us who had extensive experience let alone for students with little to no experience. In order to make this successful a concrete set of criteria was needed that upon mastery, the horses were considered safe to handle by all levels of experience.

Criteria:

Criteria
Student can place halter on without horse backing away or giving a negative reaction.
Student can lead the horse in a straight line.
Student can lead the horse and make a full circle.
Student can back the horse up when prompted by pushing on their chest.
Student can stand at the end of the lead rope and pull, and the horse will make a movement towards the student.
Horse can take a treat gently.
Horse can be fully examined: to complete this the horse must allow examination of all main body parts o Ears o Eyes o Nose o Stomach / Genitalia o Rectum / Temperature o Each leg

Materials & Methods

Materials
- Halter (properly fitted to each test subject)
- Lead rope
- Treats (approved by veterinarian as acceptable)
- Area to execute test
- Access to horses' files
- Complete list of herd
- Communication with on site and medical supervisor about findings

Methods
1. Create a baseline test including all of the herd to know what horses achieve mastery and which ones need to be further evaluated. Look at those who failed pieces of the test and compare their failed elements to their files to see if there is a correlation with a medical issue or if it is strictly behavioral
2. Those who have strictly behavioral issues begin correction using positive reinforcement.
3. Re-examination was given a week later. Those who still do not achieve mastery will be considered for retirement from the herd or further behavioral correction. Those who do achieve mastery receive a certificate to keep in their file until the following year.

Amber #86 Angel #11 Anna #70 Apple #57 Bash #18	Bonny #20 Bella #56 China #78 Ella #33 Ellie #5	Fiona #79 Jasmine #48 Kennedy #21 Latin #80 Lola #75	Moxi #17 Pearl #32 Ria #99 Sara #77 Snapple #19	Snow Fox #23 Sunny #13 TT Quick #22 Wendy #16 Willow #92

Contact Information

If you have further questions regarding my capstone experience, feel free to reach out to me via email Devinwynne02@vt.edu

Results

Baseline Test (7/30/22)

Reexamination Test (8/6/22)

Conclusion

- 32% of the herd passed the examination on their first try

- 12% of the herd failed with deviations in trials

- 56% of the herd failed their initial exam

- 60% passed upon reexamination after addressing medical issues or behavioral correction

- 40% failed even after reexamination

Following this project, in order to have the teaching herd be a successful learning tool there needs be reconsideration of what horses will continue to be apart of the herd as well as what behaviors are undesirable when looking for new horses. Over half of the herd failed on their first attempt which means that if someone with little to no experience were to be paired with them during a lab, they could have a limited learning experience as well as, a potentially dangerous situation. Using animals as a teaching device is an amazing opportunity for hands-on learning but safety is a higher priority for both horse and student.