

Ethical Considerations In Your Farrier Business

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Ethics are codes, values or rules which govern those practices of a person and profession. Ethics are a standard of behavior by which a person's conduct is judged. These codes dictate how we should manage ourselves and our business. In business, an ethical individual feels compelled to behave according to the rules of moral personal and business principles.

As a farrier and small business owner, you need to make your own decisions in regards to the ethical standards and moral values that you maintain in your farrier business. By following a carefully and thoroughly thought out "ethical codes of conduct" or business principles, you give yourself the best opportunity for achieving personal and sustainable business success by having a higher standard of conduct.

There are many ethical issues that can arise in the course of operating any small business, including a farrier business. An understanding of the different types of ethical issues will help you to identify and handle these situations responsibly to maintain your core personal and business values.

There are two main and significant factors that influence a person's ethical decisions. The first is an individual's personal moral philosophy such as your own values, knowledge, attitude and intentions. These factors are believed to influence most personal decisions. The second is opportunity resulting from the absence of professional codes of conduct or ethics or from punishment which may encourage unethical decision making.

The US farrier industry is not a licensed profession; therefore our industry does not have a universal code of professional conduct to follow. There are several organizations within the farrier industry that have their own "Standards of Conduct" for their membership such as The American Association of Professional Farriers, and the Pennsylvania Professional Farriers Association to name a few.

In light of not having a universal farrier industry wide Code of Ethics or Conduct, there are general business codes of conduct that can be followed. The American Marketing Association (AMA) is an organization committed to ethical professional conduct. They have a published Business Codes of Ethics that can mostly be applied to our farrier businesses.

Here are some of the Professional Codes of Conduct relevant to Farriers that will help you take the “high road.”

- Follow the basic rule of professional ethics which is to not knowingly do harm.
- Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations.
- Accurately represent your education, training, and experience.
- Be honest in serving consumers, employees, suppliers, and peers.
- Not knowingly participate in conflict of interest without prior notice to all parties involved.
- Products and services you offer should be safe and fit for their intended uses.
- Make sure your communications about offered products and services are not deceptive.
- Disclose all substantial risks associated with a recommended product or service.
- Avoid making false and misleading statements.
- Do not engage in price fixing.
- Do not practice in predatory pricing.
- Accept responsibility for the consequence of your actions.
- Make every effort to insure that decisions, recommendations and actions function to serve and satisfy the farrier industry.
- Act and speak in a professional manner.

Many farriers find that unethical behaviors among their peers actually test their own values and ethical behaviors. After all, unethical behavior that is not illegal frequently falls in a grey area between right and wrong that make it difficult to decide what to do when it is encountered. Furthermore, different people have different views regarding what is ethical and what is unethical.

Many ethical conflicts for many people arise as a result of human interaction, especially in social media settings and interactions. Confronting these conflicts can be challenging as usually the offending person turns their unprofessional and unethical attacks at you. This is known as cyber bullying and has been on the rise on many social medial sites. These individuals seem to be dedicated to harassing, defaming and demeaning others and are most often found in on-line communities, blogs and chat rooms. Responding professionally and ethically or taking the “high road,” can be accomplished by not engaging or supporting the conversation.

A final ethical conflict revolves around being asked to provide a trimming and/or shoeing treatment that you don't agree with. Your own response or action will depend on your own discomfort level. Each farrier has to "draw their own line in the sand" as to what they will and will not do. If you're being asked to provide a farrier service that is against show rules or will do more harm to the animal, then refusal tends to be easier ethical decision making process. It's when you're asked to provide a farrier service you disagree with that becomes a more difficult ethical decision making process. Just remember, no matter where you draw that line as a farrier, you are always liable for your own actions in a court of law.

USMA West Point Cadets Prayer – *Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won.*

References:

The American Marketing Association (AMA) Code of Ethics.

The Ethics Resource Center (www.erc.org)

The American Association of Professional Farriers
(<http://professionalfarriers.com/bylaws.php>)

The Pennsylvania Professional Farriers Association
(<http://www.pafarriers.com/bylaws.html>)

USMA West Point Cadet Honor Code and System
(<http://www.westpointaog.org>)