

# Omar Maher, DVM, DACVS

*New England Equine Medical & Surgical Center*

*By Celeste Karpf*

A familiar face to the New England Equine Medical & Surgical Center (NEEMSC) in Dover, NH, has returned as a full-time hospital clinician and a **Board Certified Surgeon**. Dr. Omar Maher had spent a year interning with the team in August 2003 and remained for another year as a junior hospital clinician in June 2004, while the clinic was still based in Rochester. After a brief stay at the new Dover, NH, facility, Dr. Maher journeyed cross-country to spend three years at the University of California in Davis, CA, where he gained valuable experience through their advanced residency Equine Surgery program.

While at UC Davis, Dr. Maher was trained in state of the art surgical and diagnostic techniques using laparoscopy, laser, stem cells, CT scan and MRI. "I worked with lameness, advanced imaging, and new techniques in repairing fractures," says Dr. Maher who often worked with high-level competition horses at the university.

Dr. Maher is originally from Morocco, where he first went to school and earned a doctorate degree in Veterinary Medicine at the Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Studies in Rabat.

In July of 2002, Dr. Maher spent a year at the National Veterinary School in Lyon, France, where he interned in equine medicine, surgery and lameness. In 2007, he received his ECFVG certificate and gained his practicing license in New Hampshire and California. Earlier this year he became a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgery (Board Certified Surgeon).

Dr. Maher's fascinating and worldly career in the horse industry make him an undeniably valuable addition to the NEEMSC. "I wanted to get to learn and experience veterinary medicine at the most advanced places," says Dr. Maher of his travels and multiple externships. He explains his objective was to, "broaden my horizons, gain more knowledge and learn more about what we can do to help horses."

Along with his impressive education and several prestigious externships, internships, and his residency in equine surgery and lameness at UC Davis, Dr. Maher has had his work presented on equine health related topics including deep digital flexor tendon injuries within the foot at the symposium of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, "Lameness related to the foot in sport horses" at the Mexican Association of Equine Practitioners in Mexico City, Mexico and others at the Annual congress of the Society of Italian Veterinarian for Equines in Venice, Italy as well as at the World Equine Veterinary Association symposium in Marrakech, Morocco, and the colic symposium in Manchester, England.

He has also been involved in numerous scientific publications on veterinary research and surgery including a publication of the effect of ranitidine on gastrointestinal motility for the American Journal of Veterinary Research in September 2008, a publication on improved technique for neurectomy for the Journal of Veterinary Surgery, a case report on laparoscopic assisted nephrectomy (kidney removal) on a horse with a renal tumor, for the Equine Veterinary Education Journal.

Dr. Maher has conducted other research projects that are awaiting publication, especially on the use of novel bisphosphonates (a drugs class including Tildren) in horses.



**Dr. Maher performing laparoscopic ovariectomy in surgery.**



**Dr. Maher manipulating a horse with back issues.**

Add to his attributes a fluency in French and Arabic, along with English, and a fondness for additional sports such as road biking and mountain biking, and Dr. Maher proves himself to be more than praiseworthy.

Dr. Maher's knowledge and compassion for horses goes beyond work and study. As a child, Dr. Maher owned a total of four dogs and two jumper horses, a Selle Francais and an Irish Sport Horse. Although his family did not share the same fondness for animals, Dr. Maher was willing to take his own path at a young age and excelled at it. He became interested in horses when he started riding jumpers at age 12. As a high school student, Maher rode at the National level with the "Lalla Amina Royal Equestrian Club", in Casablanca, Morocco, the largest riding school in the country.

Until recently, Dr. Maher did not have any pets, "I've been moving too often and have had an erratic schedule," he explains. Now that he has settled into his position at the NEEMSC, he just acquired a 13-year-old Belgian Warmblood jumper.

Dr. Maher returned to New England from California in August 2008 and is glad to be back, "Working at the NEEMSC is great," he says, "I looked forward to coming back and working again with Mike and Jackie, as we share the same values, concerns, and ethics when it comes to patient care. We always worked great together."

The New England Equine Medical & Surgical Center is investing in a lot of new equipment and technologies, which Dr. Maher is very familiar with, having worked at UC Davis. "Laser surgery and laparoscopy is something we have been doing since September 2008," assures Dr. Maher. He is also excited about the additional building that houses the new imaging center that includes a bone scan, computed tomography unit, and an MRI. "Also, with the indoor arena, we now conduct performance evaluations and some more advanced lameness evaluations that require horses to be ridden."

Dr. Maher has been doing mostly surgery and lameness evaluations, "We just did, for the first time, a colon resection." The surgery involves removing the whole large colon, "which is the biggest part of the intestine," explains Dr. Maher. The horse had multiple colic surgeries in the past and Dr. Maher assures, "The horse is surviving and doing very well." He also mentions another successful surgery performed on a horse who had "fractured his pastern."

"There are very different parts of it that are rewarding," says Dr. Maher of his work with horses over the years, "to have a horse that is losing its life and have it survive after performing surgery or to be able to get a horse into competition when he is lame and it's sliding away from him."

These are the reasons Dr. Maher strives to utilize the most advanced and successful techniques to treat horses as a surgeon and lameness diagnostician at the NEEMSC.

With his years of experience and training in the latest technologies and as a board certified surgeon, Dr. Maher continues to bring quality healthcare to horses, making him an asset to the already thriving team at the New England Equine Medical & Surgical Center.

For more information on the New England Equine Medical & Surgical Center, call 603-749-9111, or email Dr. Omar Maher at omaher@newenglandequine.com.

I first met Dr Omar Maher in January 2004, then an intern, when my 6 yo TB gelding, McGwire, got caught up in a galvanized gate and ripped his front right leg open from the top of his lower chest, across the knee and down to the pastern.

After hours of surgery and weeks of recovery, under the close supervision of Dr Omar Maher, McGwire was given a second chance and returned to hunting and jumping, with no signs of unsoundness left and with virtually no signs of a scar what so ever. I knew then, Dr Omar is a very talented surgeon, with his whole career in front of him.

In August of 2008, McGwire showed up lame, literally three legged. He cantered onto the trailer on 3 legs (a heartbreaking site) and we brought him to TNT/ NEEM&SC in Dover. It was decided we would need to call in a surgeon. To my surprise Omar walked through the door! A great relief that McGwire would have Omar to help us through!

After nerve blocks and radiographs, we could not conclusively tell why he was lame. McGwire was admitted that night. Dr Maher's experience prompted him to explore the hoof for a puncture and to see if something was in the hoof. He was right, McGwire had a stick jammed into his hoof (wood does not show up on radiographs) entering through the coronary band, down along the hoof wall.

During "stand up surgery" Dr Maher was able to dig out the stick (about the size of a small bowling pencil). It was followed up with a stay at the clinic. Dr Maher met with me on a daily basis, through emails and daily visits. The communication he provided was outstanding! I always felt a part of my horses care and felt that I was always updated to any changes to his care.

After 8 long weeks of complete stall rest (a long time for a TB who is used to daily turn out) he returned to NEEM&S for a re evaluation. The staff all remembered McGwire and was happy to see his progress.

Eight months later McGwire is back to his normal routine. We are riding, jumping, and yes even have done some spring hunts! We will return to eventing, this summer.

Thanks Omar you have given me back my horse TWICE!

**Linda S. Fernald**  
Fernwood Falls  
North Berwick ME

A week before Christmas, Cooper, a 16 year old Paint/Shire and one of our beloved horses used in our UNH Equine Program, coliced. He was quickly referred to NEEMSC for further evaluation. Dr. Omar Maher was the attending surgeon and with his team they quickly assessed Cooper to see what type of colic we were dealing with. The surgery turned out to be challenging as the ileum was caught in an area between the portal vein, liver and pancreas, causing a rare type of colic in which many horses don't survive. Dr. Maher handled the unusual surgery carefully as he went ahead to dislodge the ileum and then remove an eight feet section of Cooper's intestine. Dr. Maher kept me informed during each step as the long surgery progressed. Cooper came through the surgery like a champ and his recovery went extremely well with vigilant care from the NEEMSC staff. Cooper is now being ridden and loved by all our UNH students. I thank you Dr. Maher and your entire staff for taking such excellent care of Cooper.

**Brenda Hess-McAskill**  
UNH Equine Facilities Manager

In August 2008, I brought my daughter's 14 year old morgan, Fiddler's Camelot, down to NEEMSC for some diagnostic testing for an injury he sustained while at a show. Dr. Maher immediately diagnosed Cam. Not only did he have an injury but he had several underlying issues that needed to be dealt with one by one. Over the next several months Cam would undergo surgeries, an intensive rehabilitation work schedule and several follow-up visits. Cam's case was very complicated and, at times, very challenging to say the least. It was a constant reminder of the possibility that this may, very well, be a career ending injury. Dr. Maher never gave up on Cam and knew that he was not only a show horse but, most importantly, a member of our family.... his approach to the form of treatment was always with Cam's best interest in mind. It's been nine long months since Cam's injury and I'm happy to report that he is back in full show training and doing beautifully. We are eagerly awaiting the start of another show season. My family and I will be forever grateful to Dr. Maher, Dr. Davis and the staff at NEEMSC for saving Cam's show career and, most importantly, for giving us "our Cam" back. Thank you!



**Brooke Alley & Fiddler's Camelot**

**Angela Alley**

*Fiddler's Camelot*

*\*2007 Morgan Grand National & World Championship  
Walk-Trot Hunter Pleasure Grand National Champion*

*\*2007 Morgan Grand National & World Championship*

My horse Dew It Different a.k.a. Cane had a tiny puncture wound that involved his digital flexor tendon and an infected tendon sheath. This led to ultrasound therapy and then shock wave therapy and finally surgery performed by Dr. Maher.

Dr. Maher took his time to explain everything out to me. He made sure I understood what could be done, what all my options were and answered all of my questions, no matter how simple they seemed. He was truly a caring professional. I never once felt pressured what to do, it was nice to feel that the decision was mine to make.

Dr. Maher knew what to do to ease my mind and made me feel like the health of my horse was as important to him as it was to me.

After the surgery Dr. Maher didn't hesitate to take my call after regular office hours to explain everything out in detail to me how well things had gone.

Thanks for Dr. Maher, Cane has healed and has been cleared for me to start running barrels on him this summer and I can't wait. I never would have thought that I would be planning a show schedule for this summer!

**Tanya Condon & Cane**