

## **Call to Order**

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine Veterinarian Shortage Study Workgroup was called to order at 1:15 p.m. on September 9, 2024, at the Virginia Farm Bureau Auditorium, 12580 West Creek Parkway, Richmond, VA 23238.

## **Chair**

Kelli G. Moss, Executive Director, Board of Veterinary Medicine

## **Workgroup Participants Present**

Charles Broaddus, DVM, PhD, Dip. ACT, VA Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Thomas B. Massie, Jr., DVM, Board of Veterinary Medicine

Melinda McCall, DVM, Virginia Academy of Food Animal Practitioners

Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau

Carol Heizer, LVT, Virginia Association of Licensed Veterinary Technicians (VALVT)

Susan Seward, Virginia Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA)

Nathaniel Burke, DVM, VVMA

Senator Timmy French, Senate District 1\*

Beth Venit, VMD, American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB)

Julia Murphy, DVM, Virginia Department of Health\*

Patricia Seeger, LVT, AAS, BBA, Board of Veterinary Medicine\*

Jane Naramore, LVT, VALVT\*

Daniel Givens, DVM, PhD, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine

Randall Evans, DVM, CPCC, Lincoln Memorial University College of Veterinary Medicine (LMUCVM)\*

Stacy Anderson, DVM, Mvsc, PhD, DACVS-LA, LMUCVM\*

Cliff Williamson, Virginia Agribusiness Council

Stephen Versen, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

Nicole Riley, Virginia Economic Development Partnership\*

## **Workgroup Participant - Not Present**

William T. Swecker, DVM, PhD, DACVN, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine

## **Staff**

Erin Barrett, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs\*

Laura D. Paasch, Senior Licensing & Operations Specialist

Taryn Singleton, LVT, Discipline Case Specialist

Kelly Smith, Director of Communications

### **Public Present**

Teresa Dockery, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters\*

Caroline Buscaglia, Virginia Tech Assistant Director for State Government Relations\*

Jake Tabor, Virginia Farm Bureau

Sarah Owen, Legislative Director for Virginia State Senator Travis Hackworth

Bruce M. Bowman, DVM, Board of Veterinary Medicine

Jim Riddell, Legislative Specialist for Virginia Cattlemen's Association (VCA)

### **Call to Order**

The participants were welcomed, and introductions were made.

### **Ordering of Agenda**

Ms. Kelli Moss opened the floor to any edits or corrections regarding the agenda. Hearing none, the agenda was accepted as presented.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment was provided.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Moss opened the floor to any additions or corrections regarding the draft minutes from the April 15, 2024, Veterinarian Shortage Study Workgroup meeting. Hearing no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved as presented.

### **Discussion**

Ms. Moss presented findings and recommendations of each subgroup and opened the floor to the workgroup to discuss its recommended topics to consider.

Supporting Data: Ms. Moss reported that reference materials collected for this subgroup was compiled and shared electronically with the workgroup for the purpose of developing solutions and recommendations. Additionally, this subgroup developed survey questions that were included in this year's online veterinarian license renewal survey to capture information needed during this study and beyond for continuous data gathering.

Supporting Data recommendations:

- Maintain updated reference collection throughout this study.
- Identify additional governmental and private sector resources to develop solutions.
- Create a group of stakeholders including cattlemen, extension agents, biological farmers groups to review survey results and other data, pinpoint shortage areas and types, and assess ongoing needs.

Workgroup recommended areas of focus:

- Create a board or partnership to create an ongoing dialog among stakeholders and an information repository to identify continuing needs and shortages.
- Develop an instrument to gather, maintain and review data on an ongoing basis to generate periodic reports assessing shortages and goals.
- Gather additional data from producers to determine the number of animals in each area and which groups are most impacted by veterinarian shortages.
- Obtain additional data from large animal veterinarians, possibly during the VVMA's annual conference in February 2025.

Financial Resources: Ms. Moss reported this subgroup identified early and ongoing community involvement as key factors to place and retain veterinarians in rural areas. Financial resources and organizations that support community connections include local agricultural economic development offices, the Virginia Tobacco Regional Revitalization Commission, county Farm Bureau offices and Virginia Cooperative Extension offices.

Financial Resource recommendations:

- Explore development of a loan repayment program that ties awards to practice in underserved communities.
- Match awardees with mentors to assist with grant-writing and mentorship.
- Develop pathway for haul-in or shared use large-animal veterinary facilities to address shortages in a variety of ways: improving environmental conditions that contribute to attrition, expanding utilization of licensed veterinary technicians in large animal medicine, sharing resources.
- Create haul-in large animal practice model and match with grants or other funding for ongoing support.
- Expand educational opportunities through haul-in facilities for participants in Future Farmers of America, 4-H youth development and high school agricultural programs.

Workgroup recommended areas of focus:

- Draft budget amendment requests for an incentive-based loan repayment program in Virginia to place veterinarians in shortage areas.
- Develop support systems to provide ongoing engagement to retain rural veterinarians after satisfying loan terms.
- Develop a regulatory pathway and model for haul-in facilities to address a variety of needs, including environmental factors, opportunities for licensed veterinary technicians, shared resources, earlier educational opportunities in large animal medicine and matching with grants or other available funding.

Licensed Veterinary Technician Scope of Practice Expansion: Ms. Moss reported that this subgroup examined a variety of references that define the current LVT scope of practice and identified barriers to expanding the scope to address shortages. Issues identified included unclear language of Virginia's LVT current practice act and limitations on LVTs' ability to function independently in large animal medicine due to its geographic variability, as well as prohibitions to independent diagnosing and prescribing. Government requirements for food animal medicine and limited exposure to large animal medicine in LVT educational programs were also identified as factors. Large animal veterinarians generally work unassisted or use trained individuals to assist with safely corralling and restraining large animal patients. The subgroup received comments from the VALVT supporting the adoption of a task list such as the one developed for credentialed technicians by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners in March 2024. Additionally, this subgroup developed survey questions that were included in this year's online LVT license renewal survey to capture information needed to identify ongoing factors contributing to LVT shortages.

LVT Scope of Practice recommendations:

- Expand educational outreach to advance awareness within the profession and to serve as a recruiting tool and to maximize utilization.
- Expand pathways to LVT programs and opportunities for large animal training in LVT program curricula.
- Develop an integrated haul-in practice model for large animal veterinarians to increase opportunities for LVTs in large animal medicine.
- Explore title protection to elevate the value of a veterinary technology license and address the misuse and misidentification of veterinary assistants as "technicians."

Workgroup recommended areas of focus:

- While LVT shortages is an acknowledged problem, this issue does not align with the mandates for this study and LVT title protection is also outside of the scope of this workgroup. The Board of Veterinary Medicine can review the survey data to determine the best process to address shortages.
- Develop a pathway for rural and farming community youths to obtain training for national certification and recognition as large animal veterinary assistants.
- Develop an integrated haul-in practice model for large animal veterinarians to increase opportunities for LVTs in large animal medicine.

Veterinary School Class Size: Ms. Moss reported that this subgroup reviewed information about enrollment, available financial assistance, current class size and new veterinary programs seeking accreditation. If all new programs are accredited the number of available seats could increase by approximately 30%. Given the constraints of current programs in recruiting qualified faculty, available facilities and budget, an overall increase in class size is not a feasible option to address the large animal veterinarian shortage. It is possible to increase the percentage of seats offered to Virginia residents if funding is made available and contractual obligations with neighboring states are met.

Veterinary School Class Size recommendations:

- Explore funding options to offer more seats to Virginia residents at VMCVM.
- Explore expansion of LMUCVM's scholarship program for Virginia residents.
- Develop loan repayment incentivization program to place new veterinarians in areas of need.

Workgroup recommended areas of focus:

- Draft budget amendment requests for increasing funding available to financial assistance for Virginia students.
- Use data for loan repayment incentivization program to establish new veterinarians in areas of need.

The workgroup will convene an ad hoc subgroup to draft budget amendment requests to develop a state loan repayment incentive program and to increase the number of seats available to Virginia veterinary students. This subgroup will also discuss survey questions for producers, developing a certification program for large animal veterinary assistants, and considerations for haul-in facilities.

### **New Business**

There was no new business to report.

### **Next Meeting**

The ad hoc subgroup will convene on or about November 5. The next workgroup meeting will be scheduled in Spring 2025.

### **Adjournment**

With no objection, Ms. Moss adjourned the meeting at 4:24 p.m.

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Kelli G. Moss, Executive Director



Chair

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