



Tennessee
Veterinary
Medical
Association

TVMA Position Paper on the Supply of Veterinarians to Rural Areas of the State

TVMA and its members generally agree on the following:

- 1) Veterinarians play a vitally important role in public health and safety and bio-security.
- 2) In Tennessee, food safety is at increased risk because of the decreased role of veterinarians in the production of animal products.
- 3) Veterinarians need to be in control of the diagnosis and treatment of the food animal source for the benefit of public health.
- 4) More money will be spent on regulatory issues if the involvement of food animal veterinarians declines further.
- 5) Veterinary prescription drugs are being illegally distributed in the state of Tennessee by unregulated pharmacies and unscrupulous licensed veterinarians.
- 6) The Investigation Divisions of both Health Related Boards and the Board of Pharmacy do not have adequate funding or training for investigators to thoroughly investigate unethical practice by individuals and corporations.
- 7) There are different economic pressures on Food Animal veterinarians than on companion animal veterinarians.
- 8) Veterinarians are concerned that fewer students are pursuing food animal medicine as a veterinary career.
- 9) UT College of Veterinary Medicine plays a role and has a responsibility to attract students who will enter food animal practice.
- 10) Farmers want and will continue to seek alternatives to veterinarians in order to cut the cost of service.
- 11) Farmers/producers are increasingly using lay persons to provide veterinary services including diagnostics.

(see next page)

What are Some of the Solutions?

- 1) Conduct a study to determine the current availability and future needs for food animal veterinarians in Tennessee.
- 2) Support appropriation of funds to Health Related Boards to hire additional investigators with some familiarity of animal sciences and veterinary medicine to investigate veterinarians writing prescriptions without a valid veterinary/client/patient relationship.
- 3) Advocate for an increase in fines levied by Health Related Boards to individuals found guilty of practicing veterinary medicine without a license.
- 4) Allocate resources to the Board of Pharmacy to hire investigators to focus exclusively on the illegal distribution of veterinary medicine by out-of-state pharmacies.
- 5) Ask the General Assembly to study the feasibility of adopting a companion state program to the Veterinary Health Services Act, a Federal program.
- 6) Identify veterinarians with expertise in large animal medicine to serve as consultants to the Board of Examiners in Veterinary Medicine.
- 7) Initiate, through TVMA, a collaborative effort with the TN Farm Bureau Federation, Tennessee Cattlemen's Association and the College of Veterinary Medicine, the development of educational programs designed to better prepare students prior to applying to the college of veterinary medicine to help pre-dispose them to practice food animal medicine.
- 8) Increase the subjective parts of the interview required for acceptance into UT's College of Veterinary Medicine and develop a mechanism to give preference to those students inclined toward the practice of rural medicine.
- 9) Suggest to the UT College of Veterinary Medicine that some agricultural-related courses be required as a pre-requisite to entering veterinary college.
- 10) Encourage the Department of Agriculture to include veterinarians in the list of herd evaluators in the Beef Enhancement Program.
- 11) Make no modifications to the current premises permit system.
- 12) Encourage Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association and the College of Veterinary Medicine to educate farmers and livestock producers of the productive role veterinarians play in livestock management practices.
- 13) At this time, the General Assembly should not consider moving the Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners from the Department of Health to the Department of Agriculture.

