

**Please Support Veterinary Medicine in Kansas:
Enhance Opportunities for Veterinary Graduates – Pass HB 2605**

Kansans have heard the narrative for several years regarding a shortage of veterinarians to serve our rural communities, specifically our food animal producers. In 2006, the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas (VTPRK) was established to provide a financial incentive to veterinary graduates to practice in rural Kansas. Now is the time to enhance this program to ensure rural communities in Kansas have access to veterinary services – all across the state.

Why make changes to the VTPRK program?

VTPRK Administration – In 2006, HB 3005 was passed and signed into law. It authorized Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine to enter into agreements with five first year veterinary students. The college of veterinary medicine faculty/staff establish the program guidelines and select recipients.

- HB 2605 requests the addition of an advisory committee that will serve over the program to help select students, determine the needs of the program, and provide input to the college. The advisory board shall consist of two representatives from the Kansas Veterinary Medical Association; the Animal Health Commissioner; two members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture; and two representatives from the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Student Eligibility – The original program only allows the college to enter into agreements with five first-year veterinary students. There has been much discussion regarding the timing of when students should be selected.

- By removing “up to five first-year” and “per year”, the program could award students at any time during their veterinary education if funding is available. While there are special courses/programs the VTPRK students participate in, the program coordinator for VTPRK has indicated a willingness to explore additional opportunities for students in the latter years of their education.

Scholarship/Loan Amount – Student tuition has increased since the establishment of the VTPRK. In 2006, each participant received a loan for \$20,000 per year for not more than four years while pursuing a veterinary medicine degree.

- Striking \$20,000 and inserting “an amount not to exceed \$25,000” per year, provides flexibility to the advisory committee and program administrators to expand the number of recipients if funding is available. Currently by statute, five veterinary students in their first year receive \$20,000 per year with state funding of \$400,000 for the program. If funding remains at \$400,000 or additional dollars are appropriated, the program will have the ability to award equal to or smaller scholarships to more students.

Practice Eligibility – To fulfill the obligation of the VTPRK, a recipient must practice veterinary medicine for a period of at least 12 continuous months for each separate year a student receives a loan. The student must practice in any county in Kansas that has a population not exceeding 35,000.

- Data collected through the Rural Task Force on Veterinary Workforce Development shows the need to expand the eligibility of practices to support the needs of rural Kansas and food animal producers.
- The proposed change of county population to “40,000 or registered veterinary premise under a licensed veterinarian if food animal patients make up at least 50% of such veterinarian’s practice” provides an opportunity for practices outside of urban areas who practice primarily large animal medicine to attract a VTPRK student.
- Practices outside urban areas are competing more and more with corporate veterinary practices where new graduates are offered \$121,000 per year for a 3-day work week. Independent large animal practices in communities like Goddard are struggling to hire associates because of this.

Please support veterinary medicine in Kansas!

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