

## NP - 905 – **Veterinary Medicine** - BIEN / OTO

The Executive recommends \$1 million biennial one-time-only general fund to expand the veterinary medicine program at Montana State University.

### **Montana Cooperative Veterinary Medicine Program**

The Montana Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education have endorsed a Montana Cooperative Veterinary Medicine Program between Montana State University in Bozeman and Washington State University in Pullman, Wash.

MSU-Bozeman is the state's land-grant university, home to the College of Agriculture and already has a pre-vet advising program. WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine is ranked in the top 15 in the nation, has a strong emphasis on livestock medicine, and is the home of the new School for Global Animal Health.

### **Why is this important?**

1. **Livestock is Montana's most important industry:** Agriculture is Montana's number one industry, with more than 29,000 family farms and ranches covering 66 percent of the state's land mass. Of that, 65 percent is in pasture and range. Montana has an inventory of 2.5 million cattle and calves with roughly \$1.4 billion annually in livestock sales, making the livestock industry half of the state's largest economic driver—agriculture.
2. **Montana faces a shortage of livestock veterinarians:** Despite the importance of livestock agriculture to the state's economy, the industry has a current shortage of veterinarians to serve the state. A recent workforce study documented a shortage of 278 veterinarians in Montana. In addition, 63 percent of the 125 veterinarians engaged in food animal practice have been in the workforce for more than 20 years and are nearing retirement, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.
3. **Livestock veterinarians play a crucial role in agriculture:** Veterinarians play a vital role in every aspect of the food chain, from cattle grazing at pasture through animal health, transportation, processing, distribution and retail to the consumer.

"The decline in numbers of veterinarians practicing in rural and remote areas of the United States constitutes a serious problem for the security and safety of the national beef industry, as well as for the stability of the rural economy."—"Workforce Needs in Veterinary Medicine," 2012, National Academies of Science, page 73.

### **How does this address the issue?**

**The program will admit 10 Montana residents per year:**

It will take four years for the program to reach full enrollment, at which time the annual cost of the partnership with WSU would be approximately \$1.4 million.

**Montana would select students with strong ties to rural Montana for admission:**

The admissions committee, composed of MSU and WSU faculty and representatives from the Montana veterinary and livestock industries, will focus on selecting students with strong ties to rural Montana and a desire to work in food animal medicine. Currently, Montana has no official input into the selection of students admitted into veterinary schools.

**Summer and 4th year clinical rotations will incorporate veterinary practices in Montana:**

Senior veterinary students will have opportunities to rotate through established veterinary practices in Montana. This will improve recruitment of new veterinarians into underserved areas.

**The Montana Cooperative Veterinary Medicine Program****The goals of this new program are to:**

1. Rebuild Montana's rural and food animal veterinary workforce in support of our rural communities and family ranches.
2. Provide Montana residents affordable access to a veterinary medical education.

**The new cooperative program will build Montana's rural and food animal veterinary workforce through:**

1. Recruiting of top-tier graduating high school seniors interested in pursuing a career in veterinary medicine into MSU. Combined with a Preveternary Certificate Program currently under development, a Montana veterinary program will enhance MSU's recruiting efforts through retaining quality graduating seniors within Montana.
2. Montana veterinary students stay in the state through their first year of veterinary school taught at Montana State University.
3. An admissions committee composed of Montana veterinarians, livestock producers and Montana State University and Washington State University faculty will select students with the greatest aptitude to fill Montana's veterinary workforce needs.
4. During veterinary school, Montana students will have the opportunity to participate in a summer hire program, providing continuity among Montana students, veterinarians and producers.
5. Formalized preceptorships will be developed and coordinated through the Montana Veterinary Medical Association to provide quality training and experience for fourth-year students with Montana's best veterinary practices. As with the summer hire program, Montana preceptorships will be available for all senior veterinary students attending Washington State University, increasing the potential for additional recruitment of graduating veterinarians into Montana communities.
6. Mentorship of students by veterinarians through volunteer work and summer hires.
7. Montana veterinary students will receive student Montana Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) membership to enhance interactions between veterinarians and students.
8. Montana will have input into the curriculum for our students, better preparing them to succeed in rural practice on return to Montana.
9. Instituting a direct high school to veterinary school admissions program, by which outstanding students who maintain high undergraduate standards attain early acceptance into veterinary school.
10. Coordination with the Montana Office of Rural Health and agriculture education teachers in Montana's rural communities to educate high school students on career opportunities in veterinary medicine.