

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1705

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to large animal veterinarians.

Brief Description: Convening a work group to study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large animal veterinarians.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Reeves, Parshley, Connors and Bernbaum.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 2/12/25, 2/19/25 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/25, 96-1.

Passed Senate: 4/8/25, 49-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Creates a work group to study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large animal veterinarians in the state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Paul, Chair; Nance, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Entenman, Graham, Keaton, Leavitt, Ley, Mendoza, Pollet, Reed, Rude, Salahuddin, Schmidt, Thomas and Timmons.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Washington State University (WSU) College of Veterinary Medicine was founded in 1899 and has graduated nearly 7,000 Doctors of Veterinary Medicine. The WSU College of Veterinary Medicine offers graduate training programs in biomedical sciences, immunology and infectious diseases, molecular biosciences, and neuroscience, as well as a variety of programs and certificates tailored for veterinary scribes, technicians, and paraprofessionals.

The WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital (Hospital) facility is the largest veterinary referral center in the Pacific Northwest and treats thousands of animal patients every year. The Hospital's Large Animal Services unit has board-certified veterinarians, residents, interns, students, and licensed veterinary technicians that provide a wide range of services, including: primary care, comprehensive diagnostics, internal medicine, reproductive care, as well as routine and advanced surgical procedures. The Large Animal Services unit specialized in horses, foals, dairy and beef cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, camels, llamas, and alpacas.

The WSU Division of Governmental Studies and Services (DGSS) is an applied social science research and outreach unit that draws upon faculty, staff, and student capacity with the mission of translating the resources of the WSU for public benefit through research, technical assistance, and training projects with communities, with state, local, federal, and tribal government agencies, and with select nongovernmental entities.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The DGSS must convene a work group to study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large animal veterinarians in the state. The work group must include the following members:

- the Director of the Department of Agriculture, or the Director's designee;
- the Director of Equity of the Department of Agriculture, or the Director's designee;
- the Secretary of the Department of Health, or the Secretary's designee;
- the Dean of Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, or the Dean's designee;
- the Washington State Veterinarian, or the Veterinarian's designee;
- one representative from an organization representing veterinarians;
- one representative from an organization representing farmers and ranchers;
- one representative from an organization representing livestock producers;
- one adult leader representing a national youth development program that includes experiential learning in agriculture and large animal husbandry; and
- one representative from a historically marginalized community, such as a member of an organization that promotes the agricultural sciences and related fields in a positive manner among communities that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized.

The work group must provide a preliminary report to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, and a final report by June 30, 2026. The establishment of the work group expires July 1,

2026.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Washington is not training enough veterinarians, let alone large animal veterinarians. A few reasons for the major shortage is because veterinarians make more money and work less and more common hours treating traditional pets. Other contributing factors are the high student loan debt, the difficult distance between patients, and a shortage of support staff. Treating traditional pets is also much easier on the body as opposed to treating large animals. Data indicates that over the past 20 years, only 3 to 4 percent of veterinarians enter food-related care. Further, farmers and ranchers already caring for large animals and interested in the work cannot afford the schooling necessary to become a veterinarian. The shortage in large animal veterinarians is concerning, not only for animal welfare reasons, but also disease prevention as these animals carry diseases that can transfer to humans, such as the bird flu.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Tom Dent, prime sponsor; Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association; and Dori Borjesson, Washington State University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.