
HOUSE BILL 1705

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Dent, Reeves, Parshley, Connors, and Bernbaum

Read first time 01/29/25. Referred to Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce.

1 AN ACT Relating to large animal veterinarians; creating new
2 sections; and providing expiration dates.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that there are
5 several factors at play for the shortage of large animal
6 veterinarians. The legislature finds that the shortage of large
7 animal veterinarians is a critical issue for animal welfare and
8 disease prevention, but also for public health because the shortage
9 affects the safety of the food supply.

10 (a) First, Washington's agricultural economy and agricultural
11 communities are under enormous strain, and this deters medical
12 professionals from choosing a future connected to the industry. The
13 legislature recognizes that in 2023, labor expenses per farming
14 operation in Washington were 462 percent higher than the national
15 average and Washington is currently losing on average, two farms per
16 day. The legislature further recognizes that farmers do not control
17 their own prices and cannot simply respond to increased production
18 costs by increasing the prices of their goods. These economic
19 pressures are also impacting agriculture workers' mental health, and
20 agriculture suicides are nearly 25 percent higher than the overall
21 state rate. From 2020 through 2022, the suicide rate for agricultural

1 workers in Washington state was 21.1 per 100,000 people, compared
2 with 14.9 per 100,000 people for the state's general population.

3 (b) Second, the state has added nearly 2,000,000 people over the
4 last 20 years, but not increased class sizes at the state's college
5 of veterinary medicine.

6 (c) Third, many large animal veterinarians have left the field
7 due to long hours, unpredictable schedules, and higher wages
8 available for small animal care.

9 (2) Therefore, the legislature intends to convene a work group to
10 study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large
11 animal veterinarians in Washington.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Washington State University's division
13 of governmental studies and services shall convene a work group to
14 study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large
15 animal veterinarians in Washington. The work group must provide a
16 preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the legislature
17 by December 1, 2025, and a final report to the appropriate committees
18 of the legislature by June 30, 2026, in conformance with RCW
19 43.01.036.

20 (2) This section expires July 1, 2026.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The work group created in section 2 of
22 this act is composed of the following members:

23 (a) The director of the department of agriculture, or the
24 director's designee;

25 (b) The secretary of the department of health, or the secretary's
26 designee;

27 (c) The dean of Washington State University college of veterinary
28 medicine, or the dean's designee;

29 (d) The Washington state veterinarian, or the veterinarian's
30 designee;

31 (e) One representative from an organization representing
32 veterinarians;

33 (f) One representative from an organization representing farmers
34 and ranchers;

35 (g) One representative from an organization representing
36 livestock producers; and

1 (h) One adult leader representing a national youth development
2 program that includes experiential learning in agriculture and large
3 animal husbandry.

4 (2) This section expires July 1, 2026.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of
6 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
7 provided by June 30, 2025, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
8 act is null and void.

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