



Interim Finance Committee
The Nevada State Legislature

June 10, 2024

Dear Committee Members:

As Dean of the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources, animal health is an important priority because we have programs in pre-veterinary science, wildlife, and animal science, with emphasis on beef cattle and sheep. Thus, I am acutely aware of the shortages of veterinarians in the state, and indeed in the nation. In 2014, Dr. Ken White, my counterpart at Utah State University, who is an animal scientist, and I met in New Mexico to discuss the national shortage of veterinarians in the light of Utah State’s plans to soon open a new veterinary college, and Nevada’s acute shortage of veterinarians at that time (Fig. 1). Ken offered to guarantee a certain number of seats for Nevadan veterinary students in the new Utah school of veterinary medicine, with Nevadans having a role in selecting those students, if the state of Nevada would pay the difference between out-of-state tuition and in-state tuition at Utah State.

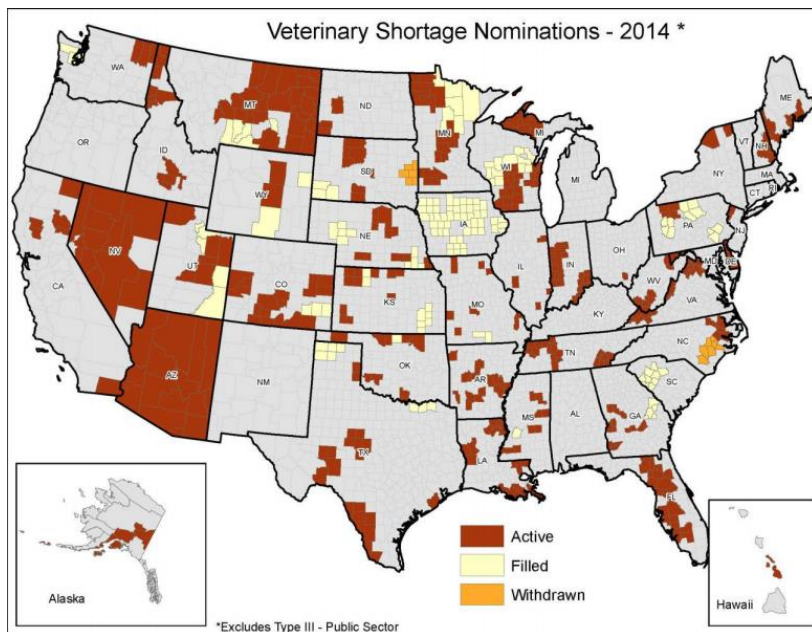


Figure 1. National veterinary shortages in 2014. From Agri-pulse (<https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/10946-usda-battles-costly-shortage-of-food-animal-veterinarians>)

public health concerns regarding zoonosis and food security (<https://cast-science.org/publication/impact-of-recruitment-and-retention-of-food-animal-veterinarians-on-the-u-s-food-supply/>).

I had tried in vain for several years to get such legislation proposed in the Nevada legislature. In the meantime, if anything, the veterinary shortage in Nevada and in the nation had worsened in both rural and urban areas. Some have attributed this to more people acquiring pets during the COVID pandemic, and others to lower salaries in rural areas. The shortage of food animal veterinarians is particularly disturbing, for they safeguard livestock, poultry, and aquatic food animal health and welfare as well as food safety and quality along the entire “farm to fork” continuum. In doing, so they help to ensure the financial sustainability of producers and global food security. Of particular importance is the role veterinarians play in preparation for and mitigation of emerging or transboundary (foreign animal) disease outbreaks which could have serious economic impacts on the entire U.S. economy, as well as possible

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USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture maintains a “Veterinarian Shortage Situations map,” which can be viewed at:

https://www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map?state=534&field_type_of_shortage_value=All&field_status_value=All&field_vsgp_status_value=All&fiscal_year=2024-01-01&year=2024

Table 1. Veterinary shortages in Nevada are described as “critical” or “high” throughout the state by USDA’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture.

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|-----------------------|--------|--|--|------|------|------|
| NV243 | Nevada | Southern and Eastern Nevada encompassing Lincoln and Eastern Nye Counties | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | Open | 2024 |
| NV244 | Nevada | Lander County | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | Open | 2024 |
| NV245 | Nevada | Clark County | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | Open | 2024 |
| NV241 | Nevada | West-Central Nevada encompassing Douglas, Esmerelda, Lyon, Mineral, and Western Nye Counties | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | Open | 2024 |
| NV242 | Nevada | Pershing County, Northern Washoe | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | Open | 2024 |

As is shown in the table for 2024, the shortages in NV are deemed “critical” in Southern and Eastern Nevada, encompassing Lincoln and Eastern Nye Counties, and “high” in Lander County, Clark County, West-Central Nevada, encompassing Douglas, Esmerelda, Lyon, Mineral, and Western Nye Counties, Pershing County, and Washoe County. Animal health in Nevada, whether for companion animals, wild animals, or food animals, is without question under threat. This is an issue that affects all Nevadans irrespective of their political leanings, and whether they are in a rural or urban setting.

That is why I was so pleased when State Senator Pete Goicoechea and several of his senate colleagues introduced SB342, which appropriates \$8 million to a contract with

Utah State University to provide stipends for the costs of the out-of-state portion of tuition for 70 residents of the State of Nevada to earn a degree of doctor of veterinary medicine. The bill passed both houses and was signed by Governor Lombardo thanks to the help of many individuals, including Utah State’s Dean of College of Veterinary Medicine, Dirk Vanderwall, WICHE Director Patty Porter, and UNR’s Vice President Michael Flores, Dr. Michael Teglas, head of our pre-vet science program, and Sheila Bray, Director of Government and Community Engagement.

SB342 is a shining example of well-meaning citizens in Nevada and Utah coming together despite political and ideological differences to successfully address a crisis that affects all Nevadans.

Sincerely,



William A. Payne,
Dean and Professor

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