

**RESOLUTION 2-23
RURAL VETERINARY STUDENTS**

WHEREAS rural Alberta is experiencing a significant shortage of rural based veterinary medical professionals; which has now reached a crisis level, and

WHEREAS there are five veterinary schools in Canada, students may only attend school in the region where they live. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary currently accepts fifty (50) students into the program each year, while it is expanding to one hundred (100) students in 2024 the current program selection process is not resulting in enough graduates to sustain rural veterinary practices; and

WHEREAS it has been shown that students originating from rural areas and/or having significant interest in and have experience with rural veterinary practice and the rural lifestyle are far more likely to locate and be successful in rural veterinary practice; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED
THAT ALBERTA’S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST**

That the Government of Alberta aid the crisis of rural veterinary shortage by directing the University of Calgary to adjust admissions to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine for students from rural areas applying by providing credit for rural acuity and prioritize accepting students who intend to specialize in large animal practice and return to work in rural areas following completion of their program.

SPONSORED BY: Saddle Hills County and Mountain View County

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: _____

DEFEATED: _____

STATUS: Provincial

DEPARTMENT: Alberta Advanced Education
Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Definitions:

- ABVMA – Alberta Veterinary Medical Association

- GOA – Government of Alberta
- GPA – Grade Point Average
- MCAT- Medical College Admissions Test
- MMI – Multiple Mini Interview
- RMA – Rural Municipalities of Alberta
- UCVM – University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

There is a crisis level global shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technologists, affecting Alberta. It is estimated that there are currently at minimum 864 veterinary professional vacancies in Alberta (377 veterinarians and 487 veterinary technologists). The job vacancy rates for veterinarians (16.7%) far exceeds the provincial average of 2.6% for all professions. The April 2021 ABVMA/ABVTA Veterinary Professional Workforce Study projected that due to increasing expansion demand (demand for service increases due to pet ownership, increased disposable income and increasing livestock numbers) and due to replacement demand, the shortage of professionals will increase more than 3.5 times by 2040. Using current trends, in 18 years, the shortage of veterinary professionals is estimated to be more than 3371 people (1331 veterinarians and 2407 technologists).

While the labour shortage is an issue throughout Alberta, rural practices are particularly impacted due partly to recruitment and admissions challenges. Further, rural communities are impacted acutely in the current environment and face restricted economic growth post-COVID without targeted and immediate actions to address the shortages. Attraction and retention of rural based veterinary medical professionals has not been keeping pace with increasing demand.

UCVM is one of five veterinary schools in Canada and was the last Canadian veterinarian program to begin operations. It was developed to meet Alberta's need for highly skilled veterinary graduates to support rural Alberta, production animal and equine industries, animal and human health research, and public health. In the 15 years since inception, UCVM has become one of the top 40 veterinary schools in the world. In 1999, RMA passed resolution 3-99F "Establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine in Alberta."

Established in 2005, UCVM commenced with a class of 30 students which was augmented by the transfer of the 20 funded Alberta students at Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM). In 2017, Alberta's government reduced funding for the 20 WCVM seats and transferred the funding to UCVM. These 50 seats for veterinary education of Alberta students have remained unchanged despite shifting demand pressures. The RMA passed resolution 16-01F that urged "the Government of Alberta to provide additional funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in order to ensure future accreditation and to provide sufficient veterinary graduates to meet Alberta's needs." Today, UCVM needs RMA's support to expand its capacity and to adapt its programming.

Currently, UCVM selects 50 Alberta students per year to enter the four-year veterinary medicine program. In August 2021, there were 5.4 qualified applicants for every

educational seat at UCVM. Alberta students are demanding veterinary education be available at home rather than pursuing their education and career in other jurisdictions.

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary currently only accepts 50 students into the program each year, and with extremely steep entrance requirements. Individuals wishing to be admitted into the program currently must have completed a Medical College of Admission Test (MCAT) and scored a minimum of 495, taken 10 required post-secondary level courses, and have a minimum combined grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 before being eligible to be considered for the veterinary program.¹ If an individual happens to meet these standards, they will then be invited for an interview where they are questioned and asked to write an on-site essay. The process that determines how the ranking order of which applicants will be offered admission after their interview and essay is based 70% on their interview score and 30% on an essay they are also required to submit.²

The long-standing shortage of rural veterinary practitioners in Alberta is well known. It has been shown that the likelihood of someone entering and succeeding in rural veterinary practice is much higher if they have significant knowledge and experience with rural practice and the rural lifestyle. Rural students across the province can also be at a disadvantage academically if they aim to be admitted into vet college. Rural schools often have less students, and this can influence course offerings. Although high school course availability is sometimes limited, rural students often have plenty of experience and relevant knowledge relating to the handling and care of livestock. These experiences should play a larger role in the decision that the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine makes when deciding whether or not to admit a student to their programs. By identifying “rural acuity”, as a benefit, within the interview process, it would recognize those with knowledge of and experience with the rural lifestyle. In essence taking the approach of the “grow your own vet” model to increase the likelihood that veterinary students will go back to their home community after graduation. In the 2020/2021 admissions cycle to the University of Calgary, eight (8) of fifty-one (51) successful applicants stated that their primary area of interest is equine, and no applicants expressed interest in large animal practice.³

In 2020, there were 1832 registered veterinarians in Alberta working in 554 veterinary practices, employing over 6600 full time equivalent employees. The total output of Alberta veterinary practices was estimated to be \$2.021 billion. This does not include the contributions made by veterinarians to Alberta’s agriculture sector, which contributed \$9.68 billion in GDP and employed 69,800 Albertans. As such, access to local veterinary services for farmers and livestock producers is essential for the sustainability of the primary agriculture industry as well as Alberta’s overall economy.

¹ University of Calgary website, 2022. <https://vet.ucalgary.ca/future-students/dvm-students-undergraduate-program/admission-requirements>

² University of Calgary website, 2022. <https://vet.ucalgary.ca/future-students/dvm-students-undergraduate-program/admission-process>

³ UCVM Admissions – Review of the 2020/2021 Cycle.

[https://vet.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/Admissions%20Review%202020-2021%20Cycle%20\(1\).pdf](https://vet.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/Admissions%20Review%202020-2021%20Cycle%20(1).pdf)

Further, sustainability and growth of our rural communities is dependent on access to veterinary services both today and in the foreseeable future.

There have been multiple resolutions brought forward through the Rural Municipalities of Alberta to seek resolution to the issue of rural veterinarian shortages:

Resolution 3-22S

Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice

Date:

March 15, 2022

Expiry Date:

April 1, 2025

Active Status:

Active

Sponsors:

Mountain View County

District:

2 - Central

Year:

2022

Convention:

Spring

Category:

Community Services

Status:

Incomplete Information

Vote Results:

Carried as Amended

Preamble:

WHEREAS over the past 30 years increasing demand in Alberta for rural based veterinary

medical professionals (veterinarians and veterinary technologists) combined with most veterinary students choosing urban centered careers has created a labour shortage that has reached a crisis level; and

WHEREAS veterinary medicine is critical to rural Alberta's economy, rural community sustainability and quality of life via its contributions to agriculture, food safety, and animal health and welfare; and

WHEREAS rural veterinary practices are located outside of major urban centers and provide services to four common domestic species (Bovine, Equine, Canine and Feline); and

WHEREAS students choosing to locate and remain in rural veterinary practice are more likely to be those originating from and living in rural Alberta and/or having significant interest in and experience with rural veterinary practice and the rural lifestyle; and

WHEREAS there are not enough training spaces in Alberta veterinary medicine and animal health technology programs (including at the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty) for Alberta students choosing a career in rural veterinary medicine; and

WHEREAS in 2020, veterinary medicine in Alberta generated 10,211 full time employees who contributed over \$206 million in federal, provincial and municipal taxes; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have a considerable role in attracting and retaining a local and regional workforce including veterinary medical professionals;

Operative Clause:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) supports attraction and retention actions to reduce veterinary professional shortages, especially in rural Alberta; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA urge the Government of Alberta to improve veterinary education opportunities and officially support the development of new programs at the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty (UCVM) through actions that include:

1. Development of a rural practitioner stream;
2. Participation of RMA in UCVM programs of outreach to rural municipalities to encourage and support successful rural student admission to UCVM;
3. Development of an online veterinary support program to help support veterinarians in practice, increasing retention of veterinary professionals;
4. Development of a stackable clinical certificate program allowing for certification of foreign trained veterinarians and providing a structured process for career diversification and/or re-entry into the work force after career break; and
5. Participation of RMA in a committee pursuing recruitment of foreign veterinarians from high quality universities to help ensure "a good fit" in rural communities; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA work with UCVM to expand the UCVM admissions committee and provide, on an ongoing basis, a selected number of committee members who are located in, and familiar, with rural Alberta needs; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA examine and implement best practices to conduct outreach to recruit veterinary students and retain veterinary professionals who will work and reside in rural Alberta.

Member Background:

Definitions:

ABVMA – Alberta Veterinary Medical Association

GOA – Government of Alberta

GPA – Grade Point Average

MCAT- Medical College Admissions Test

MMI – Multiple Mini Interview

RMA – Rural Municipalities of Alberta

UCVM – University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

There is a crisis level global shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technologists, affecting Alberta. It is estimated that there are currently at minimum 864 veterinary professional vacancies in Alberta (377 veterinarians and 487 veterinary technologists). The job vacancy rates for veterinarians (16.7%) and veterinary technologists (18.8%) far exceeds the provincial average of 2.6% for all professions. The April 2021 ABVMA/ABVTA Veterinary Professional Workforce Study projected that due to increasing expansion demand (demand for service increases due to pet ownership, increased disposable income and increasing livestock numbers) and due to replacement demand, the shortage of professionals will increase more than 3.5 times by 2040. Using current trends, in 18 years, the shortage of veterinary professionals is estimated to be more than 3371 people (1331 veterinarians and 2407 technologists).

While the labour shortage is an issue throughout Alberta, rural practices are particularly impacted due partly to recruitment and admissions challenges. Further, rural communities are impacted acutely in the current environment and face restricted economic growth post-COVID without targeted and immediate actions to address the shortages. Attraction and retention of rural based veterinary medical professionals has not been keeping pace with increasing demand.

UCVM is one of five veterinary schools in Canada and was the last Canadian veterinarian program to begin operations. It was developed to meet Alberta's need for highly skilled veterinary graduates to support rural Alberta, production animal and equine industries, animal and human health research, and public health. In the 15 years since inception, UCVM has become one of the top 40 veterinary schools in the world. In 1999, RMA passed resolution 3-99F "Establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine in Alberta."

Established in 2005, UCVM commenced with a class of 30 students which was augmented by the transfer of the 20 funded Alberta students at Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary

Medicine (WCVM). In 2017, Alberta's government reduced funding for the 20 WCVM seats and transferred the funding to UCVM. These 50 seats for veterinary education of Alberta students have remained unchanged despite shifting demand pressures. The RMA passed resolution 16-01F that urged "the Government of Alberta to provide additional funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in order to ensure future accreditation and to provide sufficient veterinary graduates to meet Alberta's needs." Today, UCVM needs RMA's support to expand its capacity and to adapt its programming.

Currently, UCVM selects 50 Alberta students per year to enter the four-year veterinary medicine program. In August 2021, there were 5.4 qualified applicants for every educational seat at UCVM. Alberta students are demanding veterinary education be available at home rather than pursuing their education and career in other jurisdictions.

Starting with the incoming class for 2022, all applicants must write the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). A pre-determined minimum MCAT score is required to advance to the interview stage of the application process. This minimum score is to ensure that successful applicants can handle the academic requirements of the curriculum. Applicants who successfully meet the pre-determined MCAT score then enter an interview process that involves multiple mini interview (MMI) scenarios. The MMI is designed to gauge a successful applicant's knowledge of a career in veterinary medicine and their likelihood to succeed in such a career. It would be advantageous for RMA to establish a strong relationship with UCVM which would provide opportunity for RMA to be part of the recruitment, selection and retention of UCVM graduates.

The long-standing shortage of rural veterinary practitioners in Alberta is well known. It has been shown that the likelihood of someone entering and succeeding in rural veterinary practice is much higher if they have significant knowledge and experience with rural practice and the rural lifestyle. A UCVM partnership with RMA will assist in identifying suitable candidates for the DVM program. Members of these communities are in the ideal position to judge "best fit". The "grow your own vet" model will increase the likelihood that veterinary students will go back to their home community after graduation.

In 2020, there were 1832 registered veterinarians in Alberta and 1852 registered veterinary technologists, working in 554 veterinary practices, employing over 6600 full time equivalent employees. The total output of Alberta veterinary practices was estimated to be \$2.021 billion. This does not include the contributions made by veterinarians to Alberta's agriculture sector, which contributed \$9.68 billion in GDP and employed 69,800 Albertans. As such, access to local veterinary services for farmers and livestock producers is essential for the sustainability of the primary agriculture industry as well as Alberta's overall economy. Further, sustainability and growth of our rural communities is dependent on access to veterinary services both today and in the foreseeable future.

Supporting Documentation

- Letter of support from [AB Milk Support Letter](#)

- Letter of support from [AB Beef Support Letter](#)

RMA Background:

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Government Response:

Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development

Thank you for your March 30, 2022, email regarding RMA Resolution 3-22S: Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice. The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of the veterinary profession to the health of the province and recognizes the veterinary workforce shortage is a pressing issue. We will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to address it.

As you are aware, the issue of attracting and retaining veterinary professionals in rural areas, as with other health professions, is a complex and multifaceted problem with no simple solutions. University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (UCVM) and other schools have been extensively studying the admissions process so more graduates enter and remain in rural veterinary practice. The faculty's most recent approach, which was implemented just this past year, requires a minimum academic performance. Following that requirement, the majority of ranking is based on a comprehensive file review of the applicants. The department remains engaged through the participation of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian in the UCVM Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

With respect to the need to increase training spaces for veterinary professionals, I am pleased to say that through the Alberta at Work initiative, Budget 2022 provided \$59 million in capital investment over three years to expand UCVM infrastructure. This initiative will also enable targeted expansion in enrollment for veterinarians and veterinary technologists at the UCVM and technical colleges in Alberta. In addition, a three-year grant was provided to the UCVM in 2021 for veterinary diagnostics to support livestock producers in Alberta and enhance training opportunities for students from those submissions.

The Ministry of Labour and Immigration will also provide support to the Alberta Veterinary Medicine Association. This will include identifying potential Labour Market Partnership grant projects that support veterinary attraction and retention initiatives, promotion of occupation and opportunities, exploring international labour pools and labour mobility matters. The Ministry of Labour and Immigration will also support sector employers with the guidance and resources they need for attraction, recruitment and retention activities.

Development:

The Government response indicates several initiatives that support the intent of the resolution. The new admissions process is of interest, as it appears to focus on elements outside of

academic achievement. RMA will monitor how this process is impacting rural veterinarian availability.

The \$59 million capital investment is welcomed by RMA, and will certainly increase the capacity of UCVM to train more veterinarians. Additionally, the work of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration to support the Alberta Veterinary Medicine Association is a positive step, and RMA will monitor how this initiative progresses.

The Government response provides new information on their support for UCVM, however, as RMA has not yet received a response from UCVM, this resolution is assigned a status of Incomplete Information. RMA will monitor for Government updates, and update this resolution once a response from UCVM is received.

Provincial Ministries:

Agriculture and Forestry,
Economic Development and Trade

Resolution 16-01F

Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Date:

January 1, 2001

Expiry Date:

December 1, 2004

Active Status:

Expired

Year:

2001

Convention:

Fall

Status:

Archived

Vote Results:

Carried

Preamble:

WHEREAS the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon has been given a four-year

extension on its accreditation;AND

WHEREAS further accreditation is at risk unless the veterinary college is upgraded;AND

WHEREAS the number of veterinary graduates is currently insufficient to meet the needs of western Canada;AND

WHEREAS insufficient graduate veterinarians are locating in rural Alberta;

Operative Clause:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to provide additional funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in order to ensure future accreditation and to provide sufficient veterinary graduates to meet Alberta's needs.

Member Background:

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine is jointly funded by the four western provinces. It just received a four-year qualified accreditation extension. Concerns for the facility include overcrowding and insufficient capital investment. At the August 10, 2001 AAMDC Northern District Meeting, a presentation was made by Dr. Kevin Breker. Dr. Breker outlined the crisis in the lack of sufficient veterinarians in the Peace Country through moves south and retirements. Other incentives may be required in order to attract and keep qualified veterinarians in rural Alberta. For example, the Municipal District of Big Lakes has agreed to bursary funding for aspiring veterinarians with a condition of returning to that part of Alberta. This issue is urgent and needs to be addressed by the Government of Alberta.

RMA Background:

Resolution 3-99F, endorsed by delegates to the 1999 Fall Convention, calls on the Government of Alberta to examine the feasibility of establishing a veterinary school in Alberta.

Provincial Ministries:

Agriculture and Rural Development

Resolution 3-99F

Establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine in Alberta

Date:

January 1, 1999

Expiry Date:

December 1, 2002

Active Status:

Expired

Year:

1999

Convention:

Fall

Status:

Archived

Vote Results:

Carried

Preamble:

WHEREAS the Alberta livestock industry and livestock numbers have grown significantly, and will continue to do so under Albertas economic trend to expand the production and feeding of livestock; AND WHEREAS this trend has necessitated increased need for larger animal and livestock veterinary services in rural areas; AND

WHEREAS the Western Canada School of Veterinary Medicine accepts and graduates only 70 veterinary students annually;AND

WHEREAS employment opportunities for graduating Veterinary students consistently exceed the number of available students, allowing them to choose their place of employment;AND

WHEREAS it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain veterinarians to rural mixed practices in Alberta;

Operative Clause:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to initiate a study to investigate the feasibility of federal and interprovincial funding and establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine in Alberta.

Member Background:

There is no program offered in Alberta for veterinarian studies. Currently, through an interprovincial agreement with Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia, Alberta shares

the costs of instruction of students enrolled in studies at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatchewan. Albertas share of the 1998-99 instructional costs totaled \$1,760,599. This support does not cover students individual needs. This is a 4-year program. Annual operating costs are \$9 million, with a tuition fee of \$5,000/year. Provincial student quotas are: B.C. 15 Alberta 20 Saskatchewan 20 Manitoba 12 Yukon/NWT 2 Aboriginal 2 The quotas were set when the first interprovincial agreement on the WCVN was penned and reflected the known manpower need for each of the western Canadian provinces at the time. Saskatchewan receives federal government support money for this program (dollar figure unavailable). With a program of this nature in Alberta, we should also be able to access federal funding. Albertas livestock statistics are: Cattle: 41% of Canadian herd 67% of Canadian fed cattle 5th largest cattle feeding area in North America 4% increase from 1994-1998 Hogs: 15% of Canadian herd 6% increase from 1994-1998 Recent employment opportunities consistently exceed the number of graduates available; they can pick and choose their employment in a buyer's market. Further, there is no way of determining what stream of practice a graduate will go into (i.e. small animal, mixed, equine, etc.) as they all graduate from the same program.

Provincial Ministries:

Agriculture and Rural Development

^[1] University of Calgary website, 2022. <https://vet.ucalgary.ca/future-students/dvm-students-undergraduate-program/admission-requirements>

^[2] University of Calgary website, 2022. <https://vet.ucalgary.ca/future-students/dvm-students-undergraduate-program/admission-process>

^[3] UCVM Admissions – Review of the 2020/2021 Cycle.

[https://vet.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/Admissions%20Review%202020-2021%20Cycle%20\(1\).pdf](https://vet.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/Admissions%20Review%202020-2021%20Cycle%20(1).pdf)