

***Resolution 2-23: Rural Veterinary Students***

***THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICES 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.***

***Response:***

The University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has a current class size of 50 students and plans to expand its class size to 100 students. This places Alberta in a high-ranking position within Canada in terms of its number of veterinary students per capita. It is noteworthy that a consistent 30-35 per cent of veterinary students at the University of Calgary come from rural communities. Unfortunately, approximately only half of those students return to a rural community to practice.

The University of Calgary has adjusted its admissions process for the latest intake of veterinary students. After identifying applicants that meet a minimum academic threshold, academic standing is no longer a consideration in the further evaluation of those qualified applicants. Instead, an applicant's work experience, hobbies, volunteer experience and home community are considered to determine which students will advance to the interview stage. The admissions process was adjusted to help ensure graduates will meet the needs of the profession and the province.

Agriculture and Irrigation continues to work with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and the University of Calgary to develop strategies to address the shortage of veterinarians in rural communities. Attracting these professionals to rural Alberta poses complex challenges, and we continue to look at ways to help our rural communities recruit and retain veterinarians.

Resolution 1-23, which is directed to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development, proposes a nurse practitioner model in the veterinary profession. The development of training and evaluation materials for this model, as well as the legal framework within which those materials will operate, will take time. It is also worth noting that most of the tasks mentioned in the resolution – livestock pregnancy-checks, livestock vaccinations, semen collection, blood collection, injections, catheterization and dispensing prescription medication – may already be delegated to registered veterinary technologists.