

Veterinarian Incentives

Iowa's livestock sector is a vital component of our state's agricultural economy. According to the 2014 Iowa Ag Economic Contribution Study, statewide output attributed to livestock production and further processing is accounts for approximately \$31.6 billion and is responsible for more than 122,000 jobs. Twenty-three of Iowa's counties derive at least one-fifth of their total agriculture and agriculture-related jobs from the livestock and meat processing industries.

One important component of that livestock-related workforce is veterinarians. These doctors, their staff, and clinics are important to the vitality of the communities they serve. They provide diagnostic services, medication, and expertise for the care of both large and small animals. However, there has been some concern expressed about the availability of private practice large animal veterinarians. Data is showing that fewer graduates of vet schools are interested in pursuing large animal medicine and the ones that do are often recruited and hired by larger companies to service their network of producers. Thus, as existing private practice community veterinarians retire without a younger veterinarian filling their shoes, it may become more difficult to find routine or emergency large animal care, especially if you are an independent or smaller producer.

In 2003, Congress authorized USDA to create the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program to encourage veterinarians to locate in certain underserved areas in exchange for forgiveness on student loan debt. Congress amended the law in 2008 to consider geographic areas of veterinary practice that have a shortage of veterinarians related to food animal (large animal) medicine, public health, epidemiology, and food safety. It was deemed that priority should be given to agreements with veterinarians for the practice of food animal (large animal) medicine.

On an annual or as needed basis, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), an agency within USDA, solicits nominations for veterinary shortage situations from all State Animal Health Officials (SAHO) and appropriate Federal Animal Health Officials (FAHO). NIFA strongly encourages all SAHOs to involve leading animal health experts in their state in the identification and prioritization of shortage situation nominations. A review group of federal and state animal health experts is convened by NIFA to evaluate the nominations from each state or territory. Following review, this group categorizes each nomination as "Recommended" or "Not Recommended" for designation as a shortage Area. On behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture, the NIFA Administration makes the final decision for designation. Each state is allotted a maximum number of spots. View the FY2019 allocation table to see each states' maximum number of allocations.

Table I - FY 2019 Maximum Nomination Allocation—VMLRP

All nominating entities (States, Special Consideration Areas*, and Federal Lands) are listed in alphabetical order, followed by the maximum number of nominations (new or retained) that may be designated for FY 2019. (See Table II for special consideration areas and tables III, and IIV for allocation process details.)

NOTE: the number of **new** nominations that may be submitted in FY 2019 is the maximum number shown below, minus the number of shortage nominations are entity elects to carry over, unchanged, form the prior program year.

| Entity | Maximum Nominations | Entity | Maximum Nominations | Entity | Maximum Nominations |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Alabama | 5 | Kentucky | 5 | Ohio | 5 |
| Alaska | 5 | Louisiana | 4 | Oklahoma | 7 |
| American Samoa* | 1 | Maine | 2 | Oregon | 6 |
| Arizona | 6 | Maryland | 3 | Pennsylvania | 6 |
| Arkansas | 6 | Massachusetts | 2 | Puerto Rico | 2 |
| California | 8 | Michigan | 6 | Republic of Marshall Islands* | 1 |
| Colorado | 8 | Micronesia* | 1 | Republic of Palau* | 2 |
| Connecticut | 2 | Minnesota | 7 | Rhode Island | 2 |
| Delaware | 3 | Mississippi | 5 | South Carolina | 3 |
| District of Columbia* | 1 | Missouri | 6 | South Dakota | 6 |
| Federal Lands | 4 | Montana | 6 | Tennessee | 4 |
| Florida | 4 | Nebraska | 7 | Texas | 8 |
| Georgia | 7 | Nevada | 5 | U.S. Virgin Islands* | 1 |
| Gaum* | 1 | New Hampshire | 2 | Utah | 6 |
| Hawaii | 2 | New Jersey | 2 | Vermont | 2 |
| Idaho | 7 | New Mexico | 6 | Virginia | 5 |
| Illinois | 6 | New York | 5 | Washington | 6 |
| Indiana | 5 | North Carolina | 6 | West Virginia | 2 |
| Iowa | 7 | North Dakota | 5 | Wisconsin | 7 |
| Kansas | 7 | Northern Mariana* | 1 | Wyoming | 6 |

*Special Consideration entities

A veterinarian entering into an educational loan repayment agreement under the USDA program must agree to provide veterinary services in shortage situations for a determined period of time. If he or she commits to at least three years in a designated shortage area, the government may pay up to \$25,000 of student loan debt per year. Loan repayment benefits are limited to payments of the principal and interest on government and commercial loans received for the attendance at an accredited college of veterinary medicine resulting in a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or the equivalent.

As of March 2019, there were seven spots in the program available in Iowa. The chart below describes where these shortages have been identified.

| Shortage ID Code | State / Territory | County | Shortage Type | VMLRP Status | VSGP Status | Fiscal Year | Nomination Form |
|------------------|-------------------|--|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| IA191 | Iowa | Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, Jones, Linn | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA191_new.pdf (235.43 KB) |
| IA192 | Iowa | Benton, Black Hawk, Grundy, Iowa, Jasper, Marshall, Poweshiek, Tama | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA192.pdf (235.42 KB) |
| IA193 | Iowa | Buena Vista, Cherokee, Clay, Ida, O'Brien, Plymouth, Sac, Sioux, Woodbury | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA193 co#2.pdf (235.29 KB) |
| IA194 | Iowa | Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Fayette, Winneshiek | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA194_new.pdf (235.3 KB) |
| IA195 | Iowa | Adair, Clarke, Dallas, Guthrie, Madison, Polk, Union, Warren | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA195.pdf (235.4 KB) |
| IA196 | Iowa | Audubon, Carroll, Cass, Crawford, Harrison, Pottawattamie, Shelby | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA196_new.pdf (235.12 KB) |
| IA197 | Iowa | Iowa, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Poweshiek, Wapello, Washington | Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area Food Animal Medicine | Open | | 2019 | Nomination Form IA197.pdf (235.48 KB) |

Additionally, some states also provide state-based incentives. Iowa does not currently offer any state-based incentives for veterinarians to locate and practice in underserved areas. According to the American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA), nineteen other states do offer some incentives. Those states include Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky,

Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. The benefits afforded to participants vary from state to state but are generally focused on providing student loan debt relief.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel like your farm is able to get veterinarian assistance when needed?
2. Do we currently have a shortage of independent large animal veterinarians in Iowa?
3. If we do have a shortage, should the schools be allowing more students into programs?
4. Should the government offer incentives to veterinarians or would it be better to let market forces direct location decisions?
5. Is the USDA federal program adequate or should Iowa develop its own state-based program?
6. If Iowa does develop state-based program, what kind of incentives should be offered? Should it be loan forgiveness as other states have done or something else?