

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2023 Interim

October 19, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 5th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture was held on October 19, 2023, at 9:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Richard Heath, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Richard Heath Co-Chair; Senators Cassie Chambers Armstrong, Gary Boswell, Matthew Deneen, David P. Givens, Robin L. Webb, Stephen West, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Chad Aull, Mike Clines, Daniel Fister, Derrick Graham, David Hale, Kim King, Matthew Koch, Shawn McPherson, Amy Neighbors, Michael Sarge Pollock, Phillip Pratt, Brandon Reed, Sarah Stalker, Cherlynn Stevenson, Nancy Tate, Walker Thomas, and James Tipton.

Guests: Dr. Ryan Quarles, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Agriculture; Keith L. Rogers, Chief of Staff, Kentucky Department of Agriculture; Dr. Steve Velasco, State Veterinarian, Kentucky Department of Agriculture; Matthew Koch, State Representative; Michelle Shane, Executive Director, Kentucky Board of Veterinary Examiners; Dr. John Park, Chairman, Kentucky Board of Veterinary Examiners; Dr. Jim Weber, Chairman, Government Relations Committee, Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association; Dr. Calvin M. Johnson, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, Auburn University; Dr. Melinda S. Camus, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Veterinary Medicine, Auburn University; Dr. Brian Parr, Dean, Hutson School of Agriculture, Murray State University; and Dr. Jason Peake, Founder and CEO, Peake Associates, LLC.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, Susan Spoonamore, and Emily Wiley.

Approval of September 21, 2023 minutes

The September 21, 2023, minutes were approved by voice vote, without objection, upon motion made by Senator Boswell and seconded by Representative Fister.

Discussion on Efforts to Address Kentucky's Veterinarian Shortage

Commissioner Ryan Quarles thanked members of the committee for the passage of 2023 RS SB 46 which created the Division of Emergency Preparedness and Response within the Office of the State Veterinarian (OSV) at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). Kentucky's Veterinary Shortage Working Group (VSWG) is about to conclude with recommendations to address the large animal veterinarian shortage. Commissioner Quarles introduced the new State Veterinarian, Dr. Steve Velasco, who provided his background and intentions with the OSV.

Keith Rogers stated the OSV has had workload and staffing challenges over the past 10 years. Commissioner Quarles's administration has rebuilt staffing numbers due to increased demand. Some areas of need include the growing cervid population, increasing backyard flocks, and processing of Certificates of Veterinarian Inspection (CVI). KDA is requesting additional funding

for the OSV in the 2024-2026 Biennial Budget to provide 4 positions in its new Emergency Preparedness and Response Division and 11 positions in its Field Division.

Mr. Rogers gave an overview of the VSWG's evaluation of the lifespan of a veterinarian from school to practice. The VSWG will meet on November 28, to finalize and approve its recommendations to address the shortage. The KDA has promoted large animal veterinary practices by establishing the Large/Food Animal Veterinary Loan Program within the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation (KAFC). The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board (KADB) recently created a Large/Food Animal Veterinary Incentives Program, which provides matching dollars to assist veterinarians with startup or expansion costs. The KDA has also been involved at the federal level to increase awareness of the shortage. Mr. Rogers stated that Kentucky has become a leader on the issue, as it was the only state to have a working group such as the VSWG.

In response to Representative Aull, Mr. Rogers noted that states are primarily focusing on financial solutions to address the large animal veterinarian shortage. Commissioner Quarles commented that other states are awaiting recommendations from the VSWG.

In response to Representative Stevenson, Mr. Rogers stated that the average debt for a veterinary student is over \$200,000. The salary for a KDA staff veterinarian is \$78,000.

Michelle Shane thanked the committee for the passage of 23 RS HB 167, which modernized veterinary medicine and the Kentucky Board of Veterinary Examiners' regulation of it. Twenty-one new regulations will emerge from the passage of 23 RS HB 167. Representative Koch stated that the bill is not responsible for the prescription requirements for Noromycin 300 LA.

Representative Koch stated that the General Assembly is allocating about \$5.3 million annually for veterinary school seats at Auburn University (AU) and Tuskegee University, and there is a need to expand the number of seats. Over half of the veterinarians in Kentucky are AU graduates. Representative Koch expressed concern for the development of an in-state veterinary school and the costs of veterinary school debt. He referenced KRS 164.295 and the loss of Kentucky's Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) contract if it develops an in-state veterinary school.

Dr. Calvin Johnson stated the SREB contract has been active for 72 years. One-hundred fifty two of 520 students in AU's College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) are Kentuckians. Sixty eight percent of employed Kentucky graduates immediately return to Kentucky. The SREB contract allows for Kentucky students to pay in-state tuition and fees to AU, with the state of Kentucky paying the difference. This is a \$127,500 four-year tuition savings to each Kentucky student for an AU Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree.

Dr. Melinda Camus stated that AU has initiated Kentucky-focused projects to address the rural veterinarian shortage. The university has published research, which finds that individuals from rural areas or those who express a preference for a rural background are more likely to return to rural practices and communities. Dr. Johnson stated that AU has contracted with the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) Veterinary Services Grant Program. Grant One's (2018-2022) goal was to support aspects of rural recruitment of veterinarians, which focused on the educational experience at AU. There was a 95 percent success rate of students returning to rural practices at the time of graduation.

Dr. Johnson stated that the KADB, AU, and the Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association (KVMA) have entered a partnership to extend the life of Grant One for two additional years until 2025. Grant Two (2023-2026) focuses on the educational pipeline in Kentucky to veterinary school. The first session was held in September 2023, where AU CVM students met with and mentored 10 high school students.

In response to Representative McPherson, Dr. Johnson stated that AU CVM focuses on business management, which is also an accreditation standard for the program. Dr. Camus stated that students can pursue their master's degree in business administration while concurrently attaining their DVM.

In response to Senator Givens, Dr. Johnson stated that AU collects employment data on outgoing DVM students by surveying students two weeks prior to graduation. Dr. Camus stated that those who are not considered "employed" in the survey are usually individuals pursuing advanced education or are actively job searching. Dr. Johnson stated that AU CVM has a holistic admissions process which considers more than GPA. There is a lowered differential between the overall AU CVM student population's GPA and Kentucky students' GPA. Dr. Camus stated that, to combat this, AU believes the USDA-NFIA Grant Two will better prepare Kentucky students academically for the AU CVM.

In response to Representative Thomas, Dr. Johnson stated that the SREB sets the rate that Kentucky pays to AU based on national metrics. There is a differential between what Kentucky is paying to AU and the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

In response to Representative Stalker, Dr. Camus stated that the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) makes the determination if a student is considered a Kentucky resident in the AU CVM admissions process.

In response to Representative Tipton, Dr. Camus stated that, on average, each class loses three to four students for various reasons. AU CVM may change its acceptance numbers each year to account for Kentucky students that are no longer in the program.

In response to Representative Pollock, Dr. Johnson stated that AU CVM believes that licensed veterinary technicians should have the ability to practice within the authority given to them within the Kentucky Practice Act, rather than creating a mid-level position between licensed veterinarians and licensed veterinary technicians.

In response to Representative Graham, Dr. Johnson stated that 92 percent of AU DVM graduates typically pass the veterinary licensing exam; six percent higher than the national average.

Dr. Brian Parr stated that Murray State University's (MSU) Hutson School of Agriculture is positioned to address the growing need for rural veterinarians in Kentucky. There is a national need unmet by existing DVM graduates. Five thousand individuals are needed to meet demand. There are 1,564 practicing veterinarians in Kentucky and 2,613 total licensed veterinarians. The shortage of rural food animal veterinarians available puts herds and flocks at risk. MSU has over 800 high school students currently enrolled in dual credit agriculture classes. This positions MSU to integrate themselves early on in students' careers. The Hutson School of Agriculture recently received a \$4.2 million endowment to support rural students studying veterinary medicine.

Dr. Parr stated that, if MSU were to establish a veterinary school, an estimated 50-70 veterinarians would graduate each year with an increased likelihood to remain in Kentucky and bolster potential veterinarians from rural areas. An emergency veterinary care facility provided by the school would allow for emergency care. The new veterinary school would utilize a clinical model framework to educate third-year DVM students. Projected costs of construction for a veterinary school would be \$89 million.

In response to Representative King, Dr. Parr stated that the profile of new veterinarians has changed over the past 20 years. The average pre-veterinarian student at MSU is a female student from suburban or urban backgrounds. As the landscape of practice ownership changes, Dr. Parr indicated that alternative workweeks have become more appealing and may be lower than the average of 40 hours.

Representative King expressed her concern regarding the presented statistics about abbreviated work weeks for veterinarians and may need to be discussed further.

In response to Representative Tipton, Dr. Parr stated that MSU has not entered an accreditation process for the potential veterinary school. MSU's program would entail a full curriculum of veterinary medicine, including large animal.

In response to Senator Webb, Dr. Parr stated that the demographics of agriculture students has changed. MSU's agricultural programs now start with agricultural literacy, rather than technical proficiency, due to lack of exposure prior to students' higher education.

Representative Koch suggested the committee consider the annual cost of a veterinary school in Kentucky and the diversity of distributive models which may be of concern.

In response to Senator Boswell, Dr. Parr stated that prerequisite courses taken by pre-veterinary students would be taken with general population students. MSU's intervention with prospective pre-vet or DVM high school students could support educational outcomes.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations - No Action Required

Chair Heath acknowledged the listed Referred Administrative Regulations. No action was required.

302 KAR 016:071 Proposed - Repeal of 302 KAR 16:070.

302 KAR 016:030 Proposed - Determination of administrative or safety violations which cannot be corrected immediately; section stop order.

302 KAR 016:020 Proposed - Inspection and operation of amusement rides or amusement attractions.

302 KAR 016:010 Proposed - Business registration and permit for amusement rides or attractions.

302 KAR 033:010 Proposed - Grain dealers and grain warehouse operators.

302 KAR 016:111 Proposed - Violations, civil penalties, revocations, and suspensions of permits for amusement rides or attractions.

302 KAR 016:072 Proposed - Notification of occurrence involving an amusement ride or attraction.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.