

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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SENATE BILL DRS55068-MHa-139C

Short Title: Livestock Veterinary Care Access/Telemedicine. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Smith (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE LIVESTOCK VETERINARY CARE ACCESS AND
3 TELEMEDICINE PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
4 CONSUMER SERVICES.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** Findings. – The General Assembly finds that the lack of access to
7 veterinary services for livestock farmers in rural and economically distressed areas has resulted
8 in serious and substantial impacts on the ability of these farmers to remain in operation. The
9 General Assembly further finds that financial assistance to rural veterinarians and to support
10 telemedicine initiatives to connect veterinary services in adequately served areas of the State with
11 underserved areas will mitigate and in some cases eliminate these impacts.

12 **SECTION 2.(a)** Appropriation. – The sum of three million dollars (\$3,000,000) in
13 recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated from the General Fund to the
14 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Department) to establish the Livestock
15 Veterinary Care Access Program (Program) to provide support for the recruiting and retention of
16 current and prospective veterinarians in portions of the State that are currently underserved for
17 livestock veterinary services, in coordination with other federal, State, or privately funded
18 programs that address access to livestock veterinary care in rural and economically distressed
19 areas. This support may include loan forgiveness programs, cost-share assistance for equipment
20 purchases and other expenditures associated with establishing and maintaining a livestock
21 veterinary practice, and subsidies for veterinary services provided to economically distressed or
22 disadvantaged livestock farmers.

23 **SECTION 2.(b)** Record Keeping and Report. – The Department shall collect and
24 maintain data on the length of time veterinarians receiving support under the Program remain
25 employed within the same county or an adjacent county as the practice site selected for the
26 veterinarian's service commitment. No later than October 1 of each year, the Department shall
27 report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic
28 Resources and the Fiscal Research Division on the use of funds appropriated by this section. The
29 report shall include at least all of the following:

- 30 (1) A list of expenditures funded by State appropriations.
31 (2) The total number of additional licensed veterinarians who received incentives
32 funded by this section, broken down by practice site, development tier
33 designation of the county where the practice site is located, and the type and
34 amount of incentive provided to each veterinarian.
35 (3) The length of time each program participant remains employed at a practice
36 site in a rural or economically distressed area.



1 (4) Recommendations for improving recruitment and retention efforts.

2 **SECTION 2.(c)** Future Funding. – It is the intent of the General Assembly to
3 appropriate to the Livestock Veterinary Care Access Program established by this section the sum
4 of five one hundredths of one percent (0.05%) of the total funds appropriated for the current
5 operations and capital improvement needs of the State in the previous fiscal year's Current
6 Operations Appropriations Act.

7 **SECTION 3.(a)** Appropriation to Telemedicine for Livestock Health. – The sum of
8 one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated
9 from the General Fund to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to partner with
10 the College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University to establish the
11 Telemedicine for Livestock Health Program (Telemedicine Program). The Telemedicine
12 Program will provide financial support for information technology and personal services costs to
13 provide veterinary telehealth for support of livestock farmers in underserved and economically
14 disadvantaged areas of the State, consistent with regulations of the Veterinary Medical Board
15 issued under the authority set forth in G.S. 90-186(10). The Department may enter into a contract
16 with one or more existing veterinary telehealth providers to carry out the Telemedicine Program.

17 **SECTION 3.(b)** Record Keeping and Report. – The Department shall collect and
18 maintain data on the Telemedicine Program established by this section. No later than October 1
19 of each year, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
20 Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division on the use of
21 funds appropriated by this section. The report shall include at least all of the following:

22 (1) A list of expenditures funded by State appropriations.

23 (2) The total number of rural and economically distressed or disadvantaged
24 livestock farmers served by the Telemedicine Program.

25 (3) Recommendations for improving access to veterinary telehealth efforts in
26 rural and economically disadvantaged areas of the State.

27 **SECTION 4.** Administrative Costs. – The Department may use up to three percent
28 (3%) of the funds appropriated by this act for technical and administrative support provided to
29 the Livestock Veterinary Care Access Program and Telemedicine for Livestock Health Program
30 established by this act.

31 **SECTION 5.** Effective Date. – This act becomes effective July 1, 2024.