

# Getting to the Bottom of the Veterinary Technician Shortage in Minnesota

## “Veterinary Technician Workforce Enhancement Act”

By Dr. Al Balay, Chair, MVMA Veterinary Technician Committee



The MVMA Veterinary Technician Committee introduced legislation during the 2021 legislative session leading to licensure of Veterinary Technicians. The soonest legislation could be passed is during the 2022 Legislative session. The time is now to reduce the shortage of veterinary technicians by legally defining them in the Minnesota Veterinary Practice Act and officially recognizing them as partners in the veterinary health care team to keep them in their profession. The MVMA leadership and Veterinary Technician Committee think licensure will lead to less career turnover, greater retention, and fewer shortages of veterinary technicians. Before the 2022 Legislative session, we can use the time for supporting and collaborating with the Board of Veterinary Medicine; and continuing to educate the veterinary profession.

There is a great resource available on the MVMA website for more information with the veterinary technician tab. Under “Veterinary Technician Licensure” is the current information including a very helpful FAQ, all the articles, key components of the bill, a recording of an information session, and other supportive documents and links. You will also find contact information if you have more questions or concerns. In this article #6 in the series, we share the next steps and introduce a unique method that a 5-doctor practice is using to reduce the shortage of technicians in the practice. We are often asked what else MVMA is doing to minimize the shortage of technicians other than the legislative initiative. All the accredited veterinary technology programs in Minnesota are represented on the Veterinary Technician Committee and we work collaboratively with the programs to maximize enrollment. MVMA staff visits the programs to share information about certification and licensure with the students. Additionally, both Kim Horne, CVT, and Al Balay, DVM, serve on an advisory committee for the University of Minnesota in the revitalized initiative for a possible start of a four-year, veterinary technologist degree program.

**What is next?** MVMA is putting together an info-graphic of key points about vet tech licensure. We anticipate sending out a survey in the fall to measure how much of the information about vet tech licensure has gotten out and to identify info gaps. MVMA is planning for fall regional information sessions in greater Minnesota. Kim Horne, CVT, and Al Balay, DVM, would be willing to attend a staff meeting via zoom if a practice felt that we could answer questions about the licensure initiative. We are working with the Board of Veterinary Medicine on an ongoing basis about the scope of practice and cost of licensure.

I hope that you will read the article about the ZimmVet Technician in Training Program by Dr. Maria Krenz. In my previous role as Director of Veterinary Technology at Ridgewater College, I often recommended that veterinary practices consider helping a prospective technician go to an accredited veterinary technician program with the hope and expectation that that student would work in the practice over college breaks and then stay in the practice after graduation. The ZimmVet program takes this idea to the next level. Learn more on page 18.