

Getting to the Bottom of the Veterinary Technician Shortage in Minnesota

“Veterinary Technicians Workforce Enhancement Act”

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



The MVMA Veterinary Technician Committee introduced legislation leading to the licensure of Veterinary Technicians during the 2021 legislative session. We expect that this legislation will be on the 2022 Minnesota legislative agenda. Be sure to check out the resources available on the MVMA website for more information. You will also find contact information if you have questions or concerns. In this article #8 in the series, we share an update of survey results, upcoming activities, and some responses to the concerns expressed in the surveys.

Thanks to all of you that responded to the MVMA survey in September. That survey is still open if you'd like to give your input. As of mid-October, there have been almost 800 responses with 26.5% from DVMs and 70.6% from CVTs. There has been representation from small and mixed animal practices as well as specialty practices, research facilities, and academia. We are pleased that almost 70% of survey respondents indicated that they are aware of the legislative initiative. However, that means that 30% were not aware of what MVMA and MAVT are doing in this initiative. We have upcoming events to help continue to get the word out. There is one regional Town Hall Meeting remaining coming in Duluth on December 4th. In October and November Town Hall Meetings were held in Rochester, Marshall, and Detroit Lakes. Check the MVMA website for more information. Additionally, there will be several sessions for all MVMA and MAVT participants at the annual meeting in February 2022. We'll be presenting other ideas to retain and utilize veterinary technicians as well as updates on the legislative initiative.

The survey has also revealed that 70% of respondents support the initiative to license veterinary technicians. There have been almost 250 comments expressed with some consistent themes or questions. Many respondents expressed concerns that licensure will not improve the workforce situation and have said that we should focus on helping more colleges start veterinary technology teaching programs. At the September 2021 meeting of the MVMA's veterinary technician committee, all four Minnesota vet tech programs as well as the Northwood Technical College program in New Richmond, Wisconsin were represented. All five schools are attempting to maximize admissions, but many do not have full enrollment and the majority shared that they do NOT have a waiting list of applicants. A new school is not the solution at the moment! We must figure out how to engage and retain those that are in the career.

Recent MVMA's staff analysis of CVT renewals reveals that we are barely keeping even with the number of CVTs not renewing compared with the new certifications. Very concerning! We know that licensure is not the only answer to maintaining technician numbers. The MVMA and MAVT leadership believe that licensure and title protection will help retention, but it is critical that the issues that cause technicians to leave the career field be addressed. Salary, benefits, utilization, the opportunity for career advancement, and burnout are pieces of the puzzle. Please read Dr. Ann Brownlee's article in this newsletter on her ideas to utilize and retain veterinary technicians in her practice (see page 15).