

Capitol Report by Thomas Hagerty, DVM

The MVMA's Governmental Affairs Committee met on November 19, 2015 to develop the Association's legislative agenda for the 2016 Minnesota legislative session which will convene on March 8, 2016. This is an unusually late start due to construction activities at the state capitol.

The committee's responsibility is to present to the MVMA's board of directors a recommendation on the issues that the committee feels are important to Minnesota's veterinary community. The committee discusses and agrees on a public policy advocacy recommendation and develops a list of public policy principals.

High on its list of priorities is its ongoing support for the budget requests of the College of Veterinary Medicine and for the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The legislature appropriated significant funding in 2015 for the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and for the Willmar Poultry Testing Laboratory in response to the outbreak of Avian Influenza which was considered a Foreign Animal Disease, {FAD} by USDA and the Minnesota Board of Animal Health. Also the college received funding to replace three isolation buildings used in research and diagnostic work. The Association spent considerable time and effort at the legislature to help these things happen. The committee recommends that the MVMA support the budget requests of the board of animal health and the board of veterinary medicine and support the independent status of both.

The Association worked with the College and others to secure funding for the Minnesota Veterinary Student Loan Forgiveness Program. \$250,000.00 was provided which will support three qualifying veterinarians for the next five years.

The committee supports the MVMA position statement on pharmaceutical compounding and recommends that the MVMA continue to monitor drug costs to the veterinarian and work with the MN Board of Pharmacy in addressing pharmacy access issues and other concerns.

Among the public policy principles is the recommendation to actively monitor legislative activity pertaining to scope of practice issues including proposed changes to the Veterinary Practice Act. Periodically legislation is introduced that is a concern for veterinarians and must be addressed by the MVMA. Other

recommendations include continued opposition to relaxation of the Minnesota's Department of Agriculture regulations on raw milk and the monitoring of the declawing issue.

The committee spent considerable time on a discussion of criminal background checks for veterinarians. It was the understanding that all new veterinarians applying for licensure now would be subject to a background check. The issue under discussion was why should existing licensees in good standing be required to undergo the background check. It was explained that this was legislation passed in the 2013 session and becomes effective in 2018. However the MN Board of Veterinary Medicine is required to develop a "plan" to carry out this mandate for license renewal before 2018. The committee voted to recommend that the MVMA work closely with the Board of Veterinary Medicine in the development of its policies regarding criminal background check implementation. This assumes it is determined necessary for new, reinstated, and currently licensed veterinarians, as well as to better understand and provide input (as needed) into how the board chooses to use the information and data pertaining to Minnesota licensed veterinarians.

The Government Affairs Committee has 45 MVMA members and it invites the MVMA lobbyists and a member of the Minnesota legislature to attend its meetings. The next meeting will be during the MVMA convention on February 5, 2016. The 2016 MVMA Day at the Capitol is scheduled for April 5th starting at noon.