

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

By the time that you read this, the MVMA Veterinary Technician Committee will have introduced legislation ([HF2553](#)) leading to regulatory licensure of Veterinary Technicians. We expect that the soonest legislation could pass is during the 2022 legislative session. The time is now to reduce the shortage of veterinary technicians by recognizing them and keeping them in their profession. We will use the time before the 2022 legislative session for networking, especially with the Board of Veterinary Medicine, education, and planning for implementation.

There is a great resource available on the MVMA website for more information with the veterinary technician tab. Under “[Veterinary Technician Licensure](#)” is information including all the articles, key components of the bill, a recording of the March 23rd information session, and other supportive documents and links. We are working to add a Q & A due to the comments received during the webinars. In this article (#5 in the series), we will address what has changed due to feedback from the information sessions, what some of the concerns are that have arisen from the feedback, and the unknowns.

The number one reason to introduce the legislative initiative is to enhance the number of technicians that remain in the career. The next and equally important reason is that regulation will improve the safety and well-being of the citizens and the animals in Minnesota. Please see the “[How Credentialed Veterinary Technicians Impact Public Safety](#)” document on the MVMA website. Licensure ensures that veterinary technicians are familiar with and understand the state’s laws and regulations governing their profession per AVMA, AAVSB, AAVMC, and NAVTA. The MVMA and MAVT Boards unanimously support this initiative.

What has changed in the language since the initiative was restarted in fall 2020? We recognize that there are many outstanding on-the-job trained veterinary technicians working in practices often for many years. The “grandfathering clause” that is proposed to the legislature is more inclusive now to allow anyone with 4160 hours of veterinary facility employment within a five-year period and with recommendations from veterinarians to have the ability to apply for licensure. Two key points: the final language and the length of the grandfathering clause are decided by the legislature.

What concerns have surfaced since the initiative was restarted? The cost of licensure comes up in every information session. The Board of Veterinary Medicine is still working on the projected licensure fees, but it is expected to be very similar to the current fees for voluntary certification other than the first year of application. Current voluntary certification (CVT) fees are \$75.00 for two years if paid online, \$90 if paid by mailing, and \$115 for late fees.

The first year, there will be a state required Criminal Background Check (CBC) and we know that there will be a state required open-book, jurisprudence examination covering the laws and regulations of veterinary technicians in Minnesota. This initial application will cost more with a projected estimate of \$87.50 to cover the CBC and state jurisprudence exam.

There have been questions about the criminal background check. The Board will scrutinize applicants with finding in the CBC for the severity and recency of transgressions. The Board has a series of actions that it can take when an applicant’s background check shows transgressions. When the proposed legislation is passed, there will be additional information about the CBC, its implications, and how one might be able to have any transgressions expunged from their record.

The need for veterinary technicians to acquire professional liability insurance has been addressed in previous articles. We have been assured that the technicians’ actions are the responsibility of the supervising veterinarian. Technicians may consider a separate policy, but it will not be required.

The concern about opening the Veterinary Practice Act always comes up but we have been assured by the MVMA lobbyists that we should not fear introducing legislation due to this concern.

Many technicians have asked about the Veterinary Nurse Initiative by NAVTA. At this time, due to several circumstances, the MAVT and MVMA are not seeking to use the verbiage of veterinary nurse.

There have been questions about the amount of continuing education that licensed veterinary technicians will be required to have. This question will be answered by the Board of Veterinary Medicine. Currently, certified technicians need 10 credits every two years. Initial discussions with the Board suggest that 15 credits might be expected every two years for renewal. With the proliferation of online learning opportunities and with the rapid change in medicine, it is not thought that this will be an onerous burden.

Lastly, there has been concern from practice owners and managers that licensure will exacerbate the problem of finding and hiring a technician. Practices will still be able to hire who they need to hire to run their practices. Practices will NOT have to hire a licensed veterinary technician. Scope of practice or those skills and tasks that technicians can perform is not established by this legislative initiative but instead is done by the Board of Veterinary Medicine. The MVMA Veterinary Technician committee will continue to work with the Board of Veterinary Medicine for the scope of practice details. There will be protection of the definition of a Licensed Veterinary Technician meaning that someone who is not licensed cannot be called a licensed veterinary technician. The term certified veterinary technician will no longer be used, recognized, or managed by the MVMA. Again, no one wants to make it harder to hire veterinary technicians or impact the ability of practices to serve their clients. Again, the main objective of this initiative is to retain technicians in the career. We believe that mandatory licensure will lead to less career turnover, greater retention, and less shortages of veterinary technicians.