



Diversification of BC economy requires more Veterinarians to be trained in BC

News Release

Vanderhoof

Wednesday, April 19, 2023 11:00am

The BC Cattlemen's Association and partners engaged MNP LLP to undertake a study of the economic impact of veterinary medicine in BC and to demonstrate how the absence of veterinary services affects the economy of BC. The study included developing estimates of the economic contributions of the veterinary sector and the livestock sector, as well as developing a case study to illustrate the impacts of access to veterinary care on the livestock sector in rural communities.

Key findings include:

- There are 1,800 veterinarians working in private practice in BC and of these, between 250 and 300 veterinarians provide care for large animals.
- The ratio of large animals to veterinarians working in large or mixed animal practices in urban BC was between 3,000 and 3,500 animals per veterinarian. In rural and northern BC that ratio is between 7,700 and 8,900 animals per veterinarian.
- The economic impacts generated by veterinarians in BC are \$2.4 billion in total output, including direct output of \$1.5 billion and indirect and induced output of \$0.9 billion.
- BC's livestock sector contributes approximately \$1.5 billion of GDP to BC's economy annually and supports over 20,000 full-time equivalent jobs.



- Veterinarians play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability and viability of the sector. They provide medical and surgical services to livestock as well as consultation on disease prevention and treatment. They also support food security and safety through veterinary oversight of agricultural operations.

The recent announcement of 40 provincially funded seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatchewan is a step in the right direction. However, to meet the demand in BC recruitment incentives and additional training opportunities are needed.

It is time to look at a Veterinary Program made in and taught in BC. A veterinary training program at UNBC would enable students from the north and across BC to stay, study and practice in BC.

Quotes:

Lara Beckett – Chair, Regional District Fraser-Fort George

“The Economic Study of Veterinary Medicine clearly shows the need for more veterinarians working in mixed animal practices in rural and northern communities. It shows the value of a veterinary practice itself, and the support vets provide to food animal producers as well as the priceless care for our companion pets. The provincial government announcement supporting BC veterinary students in Saskatchewan is a great step, and we look forward to working with the province to explore a made in BC solution to train and recruit more vets.”

Mark Parker – Chair, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

“The veterinary economic study validates what large and small animal owners have known for the last number of years. There is a shortage of veterinarians, especially in the large animal and mixed practices and is even more dire in the northern rural areas. The study shows the economic impact of the shortage and that it is having a negative impact financially across the province. We thank the province for funding the additional 20 seats in Saskatchewan; this is a good first step. There are further solutions to address the shortage; one



being training veterinarians locally in BC. We look forward to working with the province to explore different models of schooling to achieve this.”

Brian Thomas - President, BC Cattlemen’s Association

“Ranchers often provide the first line of veterinary care for our animals but we are concerned about the shortage of large animal veterinarians in rural and northern BC. It is our hope that veterinary students from BC, will come back and practice in underserved northern and rural areas.”

Backgrounder:

[Economic Impact Assessment of Veterinary Medicine in BC – Prepared for the BC Cattleman’s Association](#)

Media Contacts:

- Lara Beckett, Director, Electoral Area C – Chair, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
250-560-5556
- Mark Parker, Director, Electoral Area D – Chair, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
250-699-1014
- Brian Thomas, President, BC Cattlemen’s Association
250-486-3552