

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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<b>BILL #:</b> <a href="#">HB 1509</a>	<b>COMPANION BILL:</b> <a href="#">SB 1708</a> (Gaetz)
<b>TITLE:</b> Veterinarian Licensure by Endorsement	<b>LINKED BILLS:</b> None
<b>SPONSOR(S):</b> Johnson	<b>RELATED BILLS:</b> None
<b>FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:</b> 113 Y's 0 N's	<b>GOVERNOR'S ACTION:</b> Pending

## SUMMARY

### **Effect of the Bill:**

The bill revises the requirement for veterinarian licensure by endorsement, removing the requirement that such applicants have held a valid, active license for the three years immediately preceding their application, and instead, requiring the applicants to hold a valid, active license "in good standing" to practice veterinary medicine in another state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory.

### **Fiscal or Economic Impact:**

Indeterminate. The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on the private sector.

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## ANALYSIS

### **EFFECT OF THE BILL:**

The bill revises the provision in the veterinary medical practice ([practice act](#)) that governs veterinary [licensure](#) by [endorsement](#), by removing the requirement that the applicant's out-of-state license be held for the three years immediately preceding the application for licensure, and instead, requires the applicant's out-of-state license to be in good standing. (Section [1](#))

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026. (Section [2](#))

### **FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

#### PRIVATE SECTOR:

Indeterminate. The bill may allow additional veterinarians to be eligible to practice in the state, which will increase access to veterinary care for animal owners and patients.

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

#### **Practice of Veterinary Medicine**

The Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board), created within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), implements the provisions of ch. 474, F.S., relating to the veterinary medical practice act ([practice act](#)). The purpose of the practice act is to ensure that every veterinarian practicing in this state meets minimum requirements for safe practices to protect public health and safety.<sup>1</sup>

A "veterinarian" is a health care practitioner licensed by the Board to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in Florida.<sup>2</sup> Veterinarians are subject to disciplinary action from the Board for various violations of the practice

<sup>1</sup> S. [474.201, F.S.](#)

<sup>2</sup> S. [474.202\(11\), F.S.](#)

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act.<sup>3</sup> Veterinary establishments must have a premises permit issued by DBPR.<sup>4</sup> Veterinarian licenses are renewed every two years,<sup>5</sup> however premises permits have no expiration date.

Veterinary medicine includes, with respect to animals:<sup>6</sup>

- Surgery;
- Acupuncture;
- Obstetrics;
- Dentistry;
- Physical therapy;
- Radiology;
- Theriogenology (reproductive medicine); and
- Other branches or specialties of veterinary medicine.

The “practice of veterinary medicine” is the diagnosis of medical conditions of animals, and the prescribing or administering of medicine and treatment to animals for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease, or holding oneself out as performing any of these functions.<sup>7</sup>

The practice act defines a “patient” as any animal for which the veterinarian practices veterinary medicine.<sup>8</sup>

The practice act defines a “veterinarian/client/patient relationship” (VCPR) as one in which a veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of an animal and its need for medical treatment.<sup>9</sup>

Veterinarians are required to hold a valid, active license to practice veterinary medicine.<sup>10</sup> Pathways to [licensure](#) include licensure by examination,<sup>11</sup> endorsement,<sup>12</sup> or temporary licensure.<sup>13</sup>

#### Licensure by Examination

Licensure by examination requires the applicant to take the following examinations, as chosen by the Board:<sup>14</sup>

- North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) developed by the International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA); and
- Laws and rules related to the practice of veterinary medicine (the Florida laws and rules examination)<sup>15</sup>.

DBPR is required to license each applicant who the Board certifies has:<sup>16</sup>

- Completed the application form and remitted an examination fee set by the Board.<sup>17</sup>
- Successfully completed the examination or an examination determined by the Board to be equivalent.

<sup>3</sup> Ss. [474.213](#) and [474.214, F.S.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [S. 474.215\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [S. 474.211, F.S.](#)

<sup>6</sup> See s. [474.202\(13\)](#), F.S. Section [474.202\(1\), F.S.](#) defines “animal” as “any mammal other than a human being or any bird, amphibian, fish, or reptile, wild or domestic, living or dead.”

<sup>7</sup> See s. [474.202\(9\), F.S.](#) Also included is the determination of the health, fitness, or soundness of an animal, and the performance of any manual procedure for the diagnosis or treatment of pregnancy or fertility or infertility of animals.

<sup>8</sup> [S. 474.202\(8\), F.S.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [S. 474.202\(12\), F.S.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [S. 474.213\(1\)\(i\), F.S.](#)

<sup>11</sup> See s. [474.207, F.S.](#)

<sup>12</sup> See s. [474.217, F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> See s. [474.2125, F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> R. 61G18-11, F.A.C.

<sup>15</sup> DBPR, *Veterinary Medicine Examinations*, <https://www2.myfloridalicense.com/examination-information/veterinary-medicine-examinations/> (Last visited Jan. 29, 2026).

<sup>16</sup> [S. 474.207\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>17</sup> R. 61G18-12, F.A.C.

- Demonstrated knowledge of the laws and rules governing the practice of veterinary medicine in Florida in a manner designated by rules of the Board.

Applicants are required to have graduated from a college of veterinary medicine in order to qualify for licensure by examination.<sup>18</sup> The college of veterinary medicine must be:

- Accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education; or
- Listed in the American Veterinary Medical Association Roster of Veterinary Colleges of the World and obtained a certificate from the Education Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates or the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence.

### Licensure by Endorsement

DBPR must issue a license by endorsement to applicants who pay the required fee and successfully complete the Florida laws and rules examination.<sup>19</sup> Applicants who have never had disciplinary action taken against any professional license by any jurisdiction may, in lieu of taking the Florida laws and rules examination, complete a Board approved 2 hour continuing education course on Florida's laws and rules as set forth in r. 61G18-16.002(2), F.A.C.<sup>20</sup> In addition, an applicant for endorsement must either:

- **Hold, and have held for the three years immediately preceding** the application for licensure, a valid, active license to practice veterinary medicine in another state of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a territory of the United States, provided that the applicant has successfully completed a state, regional, national, or other examination equivalent to or more stringent than the exam required by the board; **or**
- **Have graduated from a college of veterinary medicine** and:
  - Successfully completed a state, regional, national, or other examination which is equivalent to or more stringent than the DBPR examination; and
  - Passed the Board's clinical competency examination or another clinical competency examination.

### Temporary Licensure

The Board must adopt rules<sup>21</sup> providing for the issuance of a temporary license to a veterinarian licensed in another state, who would qualify for licensure by endorsement, to provide veterinary medical services in this state<sup>22</sup> In order to be issued a temporary license, an applicant must demonstrate to the Board that the veterinarian meets the following qualifications:<sup>23</sup>

- Has filed an application identifying the name and address of the owner of the animals to be treated, the type of animals to be treated and their injury or disease, the location the treatment is to be performed, and the names, addresses, and titles of all persons entering the state with the applicant to perform the treatment, or has filed an application and is responding to an emergency as defined in [s. 252.34\(2\), F.S.](#), for the treatment of animals of multiple owners;
- Has paid the temporary licensure fee;
- Holds an active license to practice veterinary medicine in another state of the United States and that any license to practice veterinary medicine that he has ever held has never been revoked, suspended or otherwise acted against by the licensing authority. For the purposes of this rule, the Board interprets the phrase "valid license" as requiring an active license;
- Is neither the subject of any pending prosecution nor has he ever been convicted of any offense which is related to the practice of veterinary medicine; and
- Satisfies the qualifications for licensure by endorsement, except for having demonstrated knowledge of the laws and rules of veterinary medicine in this State as required by [s. 474.217\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>18</sup> [S. 474.207\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>19</sup> R. 61G18-14.002(4), F.A.C.

<sup>20</sup> R. 61G18-14.002(5), F.A.C.

<sup>21</sup> R. 61G18-25.001, F.A.C.

<sup>22</sup> [S. 474.2125\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>23</sup> R. 61G18-25.001(1), F.A.C.

Temporary licenses are valid for no more than 30 days after issuance. After 30 days, a new license is required.<sup>24</sup>

## **Veterinarian Shortage**

### *Pets*

According to a survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association, 70 percent of U.S. households, or about 90.5 million families, own a pet. This is an increase from 56 percent of U.S. households in 1988, and 67 percent in 2019.<sup>25</sup> As a result, experts say there is a shortage of veterinarians in the U.S., which is expected to result in the need for approximately 15,000 veterinarians by the year 2030.<sup>26</sup> A study from Banfield Pet Hospital reveals an estimated 75 million pets in the U.S. may not have access to the veterinary care they need by 2030, with an important factor being a critical shortage of veterinarians.<sup>27</sup>

### *Livestock*

According to a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University, the U.S. has lost 90 percent of its large animal and livestock veterinarians since the end of World War II.<sup>28</sup> The University of Florida's Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, Dana Zimmel, has indicated that there is a shortage of veterinarians in Florida, which in addition to pets has "1.7 million beef cattle and dairy cows, more horses than Kentucky and an alarming decline of manatee." The state's only veterinary medical college, the University of Florida, also reports that due to limited capacity, it must turn away 1,500 qualified candidates a year.<sup>29</sup> According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture, two factors are largely responsible for the shortage: the cost of obtaining a doctor of veterinary medicine degree and the pay disparity between companion animal veterinarians and large animal veterinarians. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "the shortage has proven to be an especially salient issue for rural communities across the country and has broad implications for livestock health, economic stability in the agricultural sector, and America's food security."<sup>30</sup>

## **OTHER RESOURCES:**

[DBPR: Veterinary Medicine Board Information](#)

[USDA: Veterinary Shortage Situations Map](#)

[NCSL: Large Animal Veterinary Shortage](#)

<sup>24</sup> S. 474.2125(1), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Insurance Information Institute, *Facts + Statistics: Pet Ownership and Insurance*, <https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-pet-ownership-and-insurance#:~:text=Seventy%20percent%20of%20U.S.%20households,and%2067%20percent%20in%202019>. (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>26</sup> Spectrum News 13, *Mobile 'ElleVet' clinic helps relieve veterinarian shortage*, <https://www.mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2023/02/03/the-ellevet-project-#:~:text=%E2%80%94%20Experts%20say%20there's%20a%20shortage,States%20may%20not%20get%20care>. (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>27</sup> Banfield Pet Hospital, *75 million pets may not have access to veterinary care by 2030, New Banfield® study finds*, <https://www.banfield.com/en/about-banfield/newsroom/press-releases/2020/75-million-pets-may-not-have-access-to-veterinary> (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>28</sup> Lisa M. Weltzien Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, *THE LIVESTOCK VETERINARIAN SHORTAGE IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY*, <https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2023-06/the-livestock-veterinarian-shortage.pdf> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

<sup>29</sup> Dana Zimmel, *Florida needs more veterinarians* / *Column*, Tampa Bay Times (January 3, 2022), <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2022/01/03/florida-needs-more-veterinarians-column/> (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>30</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Large Animal Veterinary Shortage*, <https://www.ncsl.org/environment-and-natural-resources/large-animal-veterinary-shortage> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).