

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Rules

BILL: SB 1708

INTRODUCER: Senator Gaetz

SUBJECT: Veterinary Licensure

DATE: February 23, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Baird</u>	<u>Imhof</u>	<u>RI</u>	Favorable
2.	<u>Davis</u>	<u>Betta</u>	<u>AEG</u>	Favorable
3.	<u>Baird</u>	<u>Kruse</u>	<u>RC</u>	Favorable

I. Summary:

SB 1708 changes the licensure by endorsement process for applicants seeking to be licensed in Florida as a veterinarian by removing the requirement that the applicant has held a valid and active license to practice veterinary medicine in another jurisdiction for the three years immediately preceding the application for licensure.

The bill also clarifies that an applicant must be in good standing in their current jurisdiction to be granted a licensure by endorsement.

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Practice of Veterinary Medicine

The Board of Veterinary Medicine (board) within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) implements the provisions of ch. 474, F.S., relating to veterinary medical practice (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.¹

¹ Section 474.201, F.S.

A “veterinarian” is a health care practitioner licensed by the board to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in Florida² and they are subject to disciplinary action from the board for various violations of the practice act.³

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.⁴

Veterinary medicine includes, with respect to animals, all of the following:

- Surgery.
- Acupuncture.
- Obstetrics.
- Dentistry.
- Physical therapy.
- Radiology.
- Theriogenology (reproductive medicine).
- Other branches or specialties of veterinary medicine.⁵

Any permanent or mobile establishment where a licensed veterinarian practices must have a premises permit issued by the DBPR.⁶ Each person to whom a veterinary license or premises permit is issued must conspicuously display such document in her or his office, place of business, or place of employment in a permanent or mobile veterinary establishment or clinic.⁷

By virtue of accepting a license to practice veterinary medicine in Florida, a veterinarian consents to:

- Render a handwriting sample to an agent of the DBPR and, further, to have waived any objections to its use as evidence against her or him.
- Waive the confidentiality and authorize the preparation and release of medical reports pertaining to the mental or physical condition of the licensee when the DBPR has reason to believe that a violation of this chapter has occurred and when the DBPR issues an order, based on the need for additional information, to produce such medical reports for the time period relevant to the complaint.⁸

² Section 474.202(11), F.S.

³ Sections 474.213 and 474.214, F.S.

⁴ Section 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.

⁵ Section 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.”

⁶ Section 474.215(1), F.S.

⁷ Section 474.216, F.S.

⁸ Section 474.2185, F.S.

For Fiscal Year 2023-2024, there were 13,392 actively licensed veterinarians in Florida. The DBPR received 611 complaints, which resulted in 44 disciplinary actions.⁹

Exemptions

Ten categories of persons are exempt from complying with ch. 474, F.S.:

- Faculty veterinarians with assigned teaching duties at accredited¹⁰ institutions.
- Intern/resident veterinarians at accredited institutions who are graduates of an accredited institution, but only until they complete or terminate their training.
- Students in a school or college of veterinary medicine who perform assigned duties by an instructor (no accreditation of the institution is required), or work as preceptors¹¹ (if the preceptorship is required for graduation from an accredited institution).
- Doctors of veterinary medicine employed by a state agency or the United States Government while actually engaged in the performance of official duties at the installations for which the services were engaged.
- Persons or their employees caring for the persons' own animals, as well as part-time or temporary employees, or independent contractors, who are hired by an owner to help with herd management and animal husbandry tasks (excluding immunization or treatment of diseases that are communicable to humans and significant to public health) for herd/flock animals, with certain limitations; however, the exemption is not available to a person licensed as a veterinarian in another state and temporarily practicing in Florida, or convicted of violating ch. 828, F.S., on animal cruelty, or of any similar offense in another jurisdiction, and employment may not be provided for the purpose of circumventing ch. 474, F.S.
- Certain entities or persons¹² that conduct experiments and scientific research on animals as part of the development of pharmaceuticals, biologicals, serums, or treatment methods or techniques to diagnose or treat human ailments, or in the study and development of methods and techniques applicable to the practice of veterinary medicine.

⁹ Department of Business and Professional Regulation, *Division of Professions Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023-2024*, <https://www2.myfloridalicense.com/os/documents/Division%20Annual%20Report%20FY%2023-24.pdf>, (last visited January 22, 2026).

¹⁰ Sections 474.203(1) and (2), F.S., provide that accreditation of a school or college must be granted by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Council on Education, or the AVMA Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates. The AVMA Council on Education is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the accrediting body for schools and programs that offer the professional Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree (or its equivalent) in the United States and Canada, and may also approve foreign veterinary colleges. *See* <https://www.avma.org/professionaldevelopment/education/accreditation/colleges/pages/coe-pp-overview-of-the-coe.aspx> (last visited January 22, 2026). The AVMA Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates assists graduates of foreign, non-accredited schools to meet the requirement of most states that such foreign graduates successfully complete an educational equivalency assessment certification program. *See* <https://www.avma.org/professionaldevelopment/education/foreign/pages/ecfvg-about-us.aspx> (last visited January 22, 2026). In turn, the CHEA, a national advocate for regulation of academic quality through accreditation, is an association of degree-granting colleges and universities. *See* <http://chea.org/about> (last visited January 22, 2026).

¹¹ A preceptor is a skilled practitioner or faculty member, who directs, teaches, supervises, and evaluates students in a clinical setting to allow practical experience with patients. *See* <https://www.merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/preceptor#medicalDictionary> (last visited January 22, 2026).

¹² *See* s. 474.203(6), F.S., which states that the exemption applies to “[s]tate agencies, accredited schools, institutions, foundations, business corporations or associations, physicians licensed to practice medicine and surgery in all its branches, graduate doctors of veterinary medicine, or persons under the direct supervision thereof”

- Veterinary aides, nurses, laboratory technicians, preceptors, or other employees of a licensed veterinarian, who administer medication or provide help or support under the responsible supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
- Certain non-Florida veterinarians who are licensed and actively practicing veterinary medicine in another state, are board certified in a specialty recognized by the board and are assisting upon request of a Florida-licensed veterinarian to consult on the treatment of a specific animal or on the treatment on a specific case of the animals of a single owner.
- Employees, agents, or contractors of public or private animal shelters, humane organizations, or animal control agencies operated by a humane organization, county, municipality, or incorporated political subdivision, whose work is confined solely to implanting radio frequency identification device microchips in dogs and cats in accordance with s. 823.15, F.S.¹³
- Paramedics or emergency medical technicians providing emergency medical care to a police canine¹⁴ injured in the line of duty while at the scene of the emergency or while the police canine is being transported to a veterinary clinic or similar facility.¹⁵

Licensure by Endorsement

Licensure by endorsement is the most common alternative to licensure by examination in Florida. Licensure by endorsement is an expedited licensure process which allows an applicant to become licensed in Florida based upon holding a substantially equivalent professional license from another state. Under current Florida law, the DBPR is required to issue a license by endorsement to applicants who meet specific requirements demonstrating their qualifications in other jurisdictions.¹⁶ The board is responsible for determining if the applicant has demonstrated knowledge of the laws and rules governing the practice of veterinary medicine in Florida.¹⁷

The applicant must either:

- Hold, and has 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 that is equivalent to or more stringent than the examination required by the board¹⁸; or
- Have graduated from a college of veterinary medicine accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education; or Graduated from a college of veterinary medicine listed in the American Veterinary Medical Association Roster of Veterinary Colleges of the World and obtained a certificate from the Education Commission for Foreign

¹³ Section 823.15(5), F.S., which authorizes such persons to perform microchipping of dogs and cats.

¹⁴ Section 401.254, F.S., defines the term “police canine” as “any canine that is owned, or the service of which is employed, by a state or local law enforcement agency, a correctional agency, a fire department, a special fire district, or the State Fire Marshal for the principal purpose of aiding in the detection of criminal activity, flammable materials, or missing persons; the enforcement of laws; the investigation of fires; or the apprehension of offenders.” A paramedic or an emergency medical technician who acts in good faith to provide emergency medical care to an injured police canine is immune from criminal or civil liability.

¹⁵ Section 474.203, F.S.

¹⁶ Section 474.217(1), F.S.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Section 474.217(b)(1), F.S.

Veterinary Graduates or the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence; and

- Have successfully completed a state, regional, national, or other examination which is equivalent to or more stringent than the examination given by the DBPR and passed the board's clinical competency examination or another clinical competency examination specified by rule of the board.¹⁹

The DBPR is prohibited from issuing a license by endorsement to any applicant who is under investigation in any state, territory, or the District of Columbia for an act which would constitute a violation of this chapter until the investigation is complete and disciplinary proceedings have been terminated.²⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 474.217, F.S., to remove the requirement that an applicant for a veterinarian license by endorsement must hold an active veterinarian license in another jurisdiction for the three years immediately preceding the application for licensure.

The bill also adds to the requirements for licensure by endorsement that the applicant be in "good standing" with the jurisdiction where the applicant's current license is active. This would allow applicants who have been granted licensure in other jurisdictions and who have had their license for less than three years to apply for a license by endorsement.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

¹⁹ Section 474.217(b)(2), F.S.

²⁰ Section 474.217(2), F.S.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

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

C. Government Sector Impact:

The DBPR provided the requirements of the bill will have an estimated little to no impact on the department. Therefore, the bill will have no fiscal impact on state expenditures.²¹

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 474.217 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

²¹ Email from the DBPR (dated January 28, 2026), on file with the with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government).