

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 Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government

BILL: CS/SB 796

INTRODUCER: Regulated Industries Committee and Senator Bradley

SUBJECT: Veterinary Medicine

DATE: February 3, 2026 REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Baird	Imhof	RI	<b>Fav/CS</b>
2. Davis	Betta	AEG	<b>Favorable</b>
3. _____	_____	RC	_____

**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 796 creates the Veterinary Workforce and Innovation Act and amends the regulatory framework for veterinary medicine in Florida. The bill creates a new level of veterinary professional, a “veterinary professional associate,” that must be registered with the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) and is allowed to work under a licensed veterinarian.

The bill defines the new position, specifies a formal registration process, and provides prohibitions, duties and actions, for the newly created “veterinary professional associate.”

The bill increases the duration for prescriptions based solely on telehealth evaluations from one month to six months for flea and tick medication and from 14 days to 30 days for other animal drugs. Additionally, the bill amends the exemptions in ch. 474, F.S., to include the newly created position.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect January 1, 2027.

## 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.<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> and they are subject to disciplinary action from the board for various violations of the practice act.<sup>3</sup>

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>4</sup>

Veterinary medicine includes, with respect to animals, all of the following:<sup>5</sup>

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

Any permanent or mobile establishment where a licensed veterinarian practices must have a premises permit issued by the DBPR.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 474.201, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 474.202(11), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Sections 474.213 and 474.214, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.”

<sup>6</sup> Section 474.215(1), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 474.216, F.S.

- 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

## Veterinary Telehealth

In 2024, the Legislature created and passed the Providing Equity in Telehealth Services Act (PETS act), establishing a framework for the practice of veterinary telehealth.<sup>10</sup> The PETS act allows veterinarians who hold current licenses to practice veterinary telehealth.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Limitations***

The PETS act puts certain limitations on what veterinarians are able to do via telehealth.

The PETS act requires a veterinarian:

- Provide certain information to the client, including the veterinarian's name, license number and contact information.
- Must prescribe all drugs and medications in accordance with federal and state laws.
- May not order or prescribe medicinal drugs or drugs as defined in s. 465.003, F.S., approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for human use, or compounded antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, or antiparasitic medications, unless the veterinarian has conducted an in-person physical examination of the animal or made medically appropriate and timely visits within the past year to the premises where the animal is kept.
- May not use veterinary telehealth to prescribe a controlled substance as defined in ch. 893, F.S. (Drug Abuse Prevention and Control), unless the veterinarian has conducted an in-person physical examination of the animal or made medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal is kept.
- May not prescribe a drug or other medication for use on a horse engaged in racing or training at a facility under the jurisdiction of the Florida Gaming Control Commission or on a horse that is a covered horse, as defined in the federal Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act, 15 U.S.C., ss. 3051 et seq.

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<sup>8</sup> Section 474.2185, F.S.

<sup>9</sup> 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 14, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 2024-260, Laws of Fla. (codified at section 474.2021, F.S., effective July 1, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* Florida law requires the practice of telehealth to be consistent with a veterinarian's scope of practice and the prevailing professional standard of practice for a veterinarian who provides in-person veterinary services to patients in Florida, and who must employ sound, professional judgment to determine whether using veterinary telehealth is an appropriate method for delivering medical advice or treatment to the patient.

## Telehealth Prescriptions

Prescriptions based solely on a telehealth evaluation may be issued for up to one month for products labeled solely for flea and tick control and up to 14 days of treatment for other animal drugs.<sup>12</sup> Prescriptions based solely on a telehealth evaluation may not be renewed without an in-person examination.<sup>13</sup>

## Immediate Supervision

Currently, certain individuals that are not licensed doctors of veterinary medicine (employees, veterinary nurses, students, preceptors, interns, post-exam graduates) can provide some level of care to animals if they are under immediate supervision.<sup>14</sup> The practice act defines “immediate supervision” to mean that a “licensed doctor of veterinary medicine is on the premises whenever veterinary services are being provided.”<sup>15</sup>

Veterinary tasks requiring immediate supervision include:<sup>16</sup>

- Administering anesthesia and tranquilization by a veterinary aide, nurse, laboratory technician, intern, or other employee of a licensed veterinarian.
- Administering certain vaccinations by a veterinary aide, nurse, technician, intern, or other employee of a licensed veterinarian which is not specifically prohibited.

## Responsible Supervision

The term “responsible supervision” is defined in s. 474.202(10), F.S., as the “control, direction, and regulation by a licensed doctor of veterinary medicine of the duties involving veterinary services” delegated to unlicensed personnel. Under the DBPR rules the following tasks may be performed (under responsible supervision) without the licensed veterinarian on the premises:<sup>17</sup>

- Administering medication and treatment, excluding vaccinations, as directed by the licensed veterinarian; and
- Obtaining samples and the performance of those diagnostic tests, including radiographs, as directed by the licensed veterinarian.

## Exemptions

Ten categories of persons are exempt from complying with ch. 474, F.S.:<sup>18</sup>

- Faculty veterinarians with assigned teaching duties at accredited<sup>19</sup> institutions.

<sup>12</sup> Section 474.2021, F.S.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Section 474.207(5), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 474.202(5), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 61G18-17.005, provides that all tasks that may be delegated to a veterinary aide, nurse, laboratory technician, intern, or other employee of a licensed veterinarian shall be performed only under the “immediate supervision” of a licensed veterinarian as that phrase is defined in s. 474.202(5), F.S., with the exception of the following tasks which may be performed without the licensed veterinarian on the premises.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Section 474.203, F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 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

- Intern/resident veterinarians at accredited institutions who are graduates of an accredited institution, but only until the intern or resident completes or terminates his or her 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 preceptors<sup>20</sup> (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 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 persons<sup>21</sup> 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 treatment of human ailments, or in the study and development of methods and techniques applicable to the practice of veterinary medicine.
- 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

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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 14, 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 14, 2026). In turn, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 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 14, 2026).

<sup>20</sup> 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 14, 2026).

<sup>21</sup> *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 . . .”

frequency identification device microchips in dogs and cats in accordance with s. 823.15, F.S.<sup>22</sup>

- Paramedics or emergency medical technicians providing emergency medical care to a police canine<sup>23</sup> 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.

### **The Board of Veterinary Medicine**

The board consists of seven members that are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.<sup>24</sup> Five members of the board must be licensed veterinarians, and two members of the board must be laypersons who are not and have never been veterinarians or members of any closely related profession or occupation.<sup>25</sup>

The board is required, like all boards regulated under ch. 455, F.S., to meet at least once annually and may meet as often as is necessary.<sup>26</sup> There is currently one vacancy on the board.<sup>27</sup>

### **Veterinary Schools in Florida**

Currently the University of Florida is the only school in Florida to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program that is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).<sup>28</sup>

The following institutions offered through Florida's state college system offer an accredited veterinary technology program:

- Eastern Florida State College,
- Florida A&M University,
- Hillsborough Community College,
- Miami-Dade College,
- Pensacola State College, and
- St. Petersburg College.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Section 823.15(5), F.S., which authorizes such persons to perform microchipping of dogs and cats.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> Section 474.204(1), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 474.204(2), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 455.207(3), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Department of Business & Professional Regulation Board Member Appointments, Updated March 2025, [https://www2.myfloridalicense.com/pro/vetm/documents/vet\\_board.pdf](https://www2.myfloridalicense.com/pro/vetm/documents/vet_board.pdf) (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>28</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association, *Accredited Veterinary Colleges*, <https://www.avma.org/education/center-for-veterinary-accreditation/accredited-veterinary-colleges> (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>29</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association, *Accredited Veterinary Technology Programs*, <https://www.avma.org/education/center-for-veterinary-accreditation/veterinary-technology-programs-accredited-avma-cvtea#florida> (last visited January 14, 2026).

## Veterinarian Shortage

According to a survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association (APPA), 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>30</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>31</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>32</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>33</sup>

According to the AVMA:

Conditions have pushed the idea of a midlevel practitioner to the fore as veterinary practices have struggled to meet service demands. This issue has been compounded by continued inefficiencies in practices as pandemic disruptions persist and client expectations for availability and convenience. Inflation has also increased costs for labor and for products such as medical equipment and medications, creating additional concern around clients' ability to afford needed care. Additionally, retention of veterinary practice staff members and attrition from the profession are ongoing and increasing concerns.<sup>34</sup>

The AVMA found that a midlevel practitioner may not be the best option to address these concerns, and that time and effort should be spent on resources, tools, and programs designed to retain veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians; further develop veterinary technician specialties; help veterinary practices operate at optimum efficiency; and effectively collaborate—

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<sup>30</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,~:text=%E2%80%94%20Experts%20say%20there's%20a%20shortage,States%20may%20not%20get%20care>. (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>31</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 14, 2026).

<sup>32</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 14, 2026).

<sup>33</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 14, 2026).

<sup>34</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association, AVMA News, *Idea of midlevel practitioner rejected in favor of better support, engagement of credentialed veterinary technicians* (Jan. 10, 2023), <https://www.avma.org/news/idea-midlevel-practitioner-rejected-favor-better-support-engagement-credentialed-veterinary> (last visited January 14, 2026).

within practice teams and across the profession—to meet clients' needs for high-quality veterinary services.<sup>35</sup>

However, according to a study conducted by the National Library of Medicine:

The projected shortage of veterinarians has created a need to explore alternatives designed to meet society's future demands. A veterinary professional health care provider, similar to the human medical profession's physician assistant (PA), is one such alternative. It is suggested that perhaps veterinary professional associates, modeled after PAs, could be employed to handle routine veterinary care and thereby allow veterinarians additional time to focus on the more demanding and challenging aspects of veterinary medicine. Perhaps a team approach, similar to the physician/PA team, could help the field of veterinary medicine to better serve both clients and patients. As veterinary medicine directs its attention toward the new challenges on the horizon, creative solutions will be needed. Perhaps some variation of a veterinary professional associate is worthy of future discussion.<sup>36</sup>

### **Human Physician Assistants**

According to the Mayo Clinic, PAs are “licensed medical professionals who hold an advanced degree and are able to provide direct patient care. They work with patients of all ages in virtually all specialty and primary care areas, diagnosing and treating common illnesses and working with minor procedures. With an increasing shortage of health care providers, PAs are a critical part of today's team-based approach to health care. They increase access to quality health care for many populations and communities. The specific duties of a PA are determined by their supervising physician and state law, but they provide many of the same services as a primary care physician. They practice in every state and in a wide variety of clinical settings and specialties.”<sup>37</sup>

In Florida, PAs are licensed medical professionals that are authorized to perform services delegated by a supervising physician.<sup>38</sup> PAs are regulated by the Florida Council on Physician Assistants in conjunction with either the Board of Medicine for PAs licensed under ch. 458, F.S., or the Board of Osteopathic Medicine for PAs licensed under ch. 459, F.S. During Fiscal Year 2023-2024, there were 11,890 actively licensed PAs in the state, and 1,339 initial PA licenses were issued by the Florida Department of Health.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> Lori Kogan, Sherry Stewart, *Veterinary professional associates: does the profession's foresight include a mid-tier professional similar to physician assistants?*, National Library of Medicine (2009), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19625672/> (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>37</sup> Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science, *Physician Assistant*, <https://college.mayo.edu/academics/explore-health-care-careers/careers-a-z/physician-assistant/> (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>38</sup> Sections 458.347(2)(e) and 459.022(2)(e), F.S.

<sup>39</sup> Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance, Annual Report and Long-Range Plan, Fiscal Year 2023-2024, <https://flhealthsource.gov/pdf/reports/2024.10.28.FY23-24AR-FINAL.pdf> (last visited January 14, 2026).

## Veterinary Professional Associates in Other Jurisdictions

### **States**

In 2024, voters of the state of Colorado approved a ballot measure to create a new, state-regulated veterinary position (Veterinary Professional Associate) that was to address, in part, the shortage of care, especially in rural areas, for pets.<sup>40</sup> Colorado's proposition empowered the state to create a regulatory scheme to license and regulate these Veterinary Professional Associates.

Similarly to what is being proposed in the bill, Colorado would provide this Veterinary Professional Associate with a pathway for those who complete a master's degree in veterinary clinical care, or an equivalent degree determined by the state board.<sup>41</sup> This new Colorado law went into effect on January 1, 2026.<sup>42</sup>

### **Universities**

In 2022, The Lincoln Memorial University-College of Veterinary Medicine created the first-of-its-kind Master of Veterinary Clinical Care degree.<sup>43</sup> Students can obtain this degree fully online and in as little as three semesters (30 credit hours).<sup>44</sup>

In June of 2025, Lincoln Memorial University announced plans to expand its medical and veterinary education programs into Orange Park, Florida.<sup>45</sup>

In 2025, Colorado State University developed a similar program that is now admitting students.<sup>46</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** establishes the title of the bill as the “Veterinary Workforce Innovation Act.”

**Section 2** amends s. 474.201, F.S., to update the state’s legislative findings and intent, stating that the “practice of educated, trained and experienced veterinary professional associates will increase consumer access to high-quality medical services at reasonable cost to consumers, while also increasing the efficiency of the practice of veterinary medicine in this state.”

**Section 3** amends s. 474.202, F.S., to define the new role of “veterinary professional associate” to mean an individual who has graduated with a master’s degree or the equivalent in veterinary

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<sup>40</sup> Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies, *State Board of Veterinary Medicine: Proposition 129*, <https://dpo.colorado.gov/Veterinary/Proposition129>, (last visited January 14, 2026),

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> Lincoln Memorial University, *Master of Veterinary Clinical Care*, <https://www.lmunet.edu/academics/programs/graduate-professional/master-of-veterinary-clinical-care>, (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Lincoln Memorial University, *LMU Grows Its Footprint with Major Medical and Veterinary Expansion in Orange Park, Florida*, December 9, 2025, <https://www.lmunet.edu/news/2025/12/Major-Medical-and-Veterinary-Expansion-in-Orange-Park> (last visited January 14, 2026).

<sup>46</sup> Colorado State University, *About the Master of Science in Veterinary Clinical Care*, <https://vetmedbiosci.colostate.edu/vpa/>, (last visited January 14, 2026).

clinical care from an accredited institution and who meets the requirements to be registered by the DPBR.

**Section 4** amends s. 474.2021, F.S., to change the duration of time medications can be prescribed via telehealth from one month to six months for flea and tick medication and from 14 days to 30 days for other animal drugs.

**Section 5** amends s. 474.203, F.S., to provide that a veterinary professional associate is exempt from ch. 474, F.S., while under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. The bill clarifies that licensed veterinarians will be responsible for all such acts performed by persons under her or his supervision, including veterinary professional associates.

**Section 6** creates s. 474.2426, F.S., to lay out the regulatory framework for the newly created position of “veterinary professional associate.” The bill requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to:

- Issue a certificate of registration to each veterinary professional associate or applicant whom the DBPR verifies has applied, graduated from the relevant accredited program, and received a passing score on the relevant professional national competency examination approved by the board.
- Make a list of registrants available to the public on its website.

The bill authorizes the DBPR to suspend the registration of any veterinary professional associate whom the board determines has caused serious harm to an animal due to negligence, incompetence, or misconduct related to duties performed under this section and in a manner inconsistent with the supervising veterinarian’s specific direction, until which time as the registrant has completed remedial training or education directed by the board.

The bill allows for the DBPR to rescind the registration of any veterinary professional associate who is convicted of animal cruelty or animal fighting.

The bill prohibits any individual from holding themselves out as a registered veterinary professional associate or in any other way represent themselves as a veterinary professional associate unless he or she has a valid certificate of registration from the DBPR.

#### ***Duties and Actions of a Registered Veterinary Professional Associate***

The bill authorizes a registered veterinary professional associate to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine as delegated under the responsible supervision, as defined in s. 474.202, F.S., of a licensed veterinarian, unless prohibited by other state or federal law, to the extent that he or she is competent and has the necessary training, current knowledge, and experience to provide such care.

A registered veterinary professional associate may not do any of the following:

- Prescribe a controlled substance listed in s. 893.03, F.S.,
  - With the exception that a registered veterinary professional associate may perform humane euthanasia and prepare, log, and administer controlled substances for the purpose

of analgesia, anesthesia, or humane euthanasia, as delegated by a licensed veterinarian and performed under responsible supervision.

- Perform a surgical procedure,
  - With the exception that a veterinary professional associate may perform an orchectomy,<sup>47</sup> veterinary dental surgery, or veterinary suturing or stapling of skin lacerations, gingival incisions, or existing surgical incisions.

**Section 7** amends s. 828.30, F.S., to allow registered veterinary professional associates to administer rabies vaccinations.

**Section 8** provides an effective date of January 1, 2027.

#### **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.

#### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

##### **A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

##### **B. Private Sector Impact:**

The bill may have an indeterminate positive economic impact on the private sector. The bill allows a new class of mid-level practitioners in veterinary medicine. This may lead to additional jobs, and cost savings related to improved veterinary care.

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<sup>47</sup> This procedure is for reproductive sterilization (spay/neuter). It is used to reduce the incidence of the most common canine prostatic diseases, tumors, and unwanted behaviors. Today's Veterinary Practice, *Update on Orchectomy*, [https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/10/TVP-2022-1112\\_Orchectomy.pdf](https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/10/TVP-2022-1112_Orchectomy.pdf) (last visited January 14, 2026).

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) may incur an indeterminate increase in costs related to creating and administering the registration program for veterinary professional associates. It is unknown how many people may apply for a certificate of registration. To date, no analysis by the DBPR of the impact of the bill on its operations, revenues, and expenditures has been provided.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 474.201, 474.202, 474.2021, 474.203, and 828.30.

This bill creates section 474.2126 of the Florida Statutes.

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

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

**CS by Regulated Industries on January 12, 2026:**

The Committee Substitute removed from the bill the following:

- Definitions for the terms “veterinary technician” or “veterinary technologist” and “veterinary technology.”
- References to “veterinary technology,” “program for veterinary technology,” “veterinary technician” and “veterinary technologist” from the exemptions section of ch. 474, F.S.
- Provision altering the composition of the Board of Veterinary Medicine.
- Regulatory mechanism including registration, prohibitions, and duties and actions for “veterinary technicians” or “veterinary technologists.”
- Provisions regarding administration of medication by veterinary professional associates, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technologists.
- Provisions regarding delegation of tasks by the supervising licensed veterinarian to veterinary technicians and veterinary technologists.
- Provisions regarding liability of the supervising licensed veterinarian for acts or omissions of registered veterinary professional associates, veterinary technicians, or veterinary technologists.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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

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