

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/HB 805](#)

**TITLE:** Veterinary Medicine

**SPONSOR(S):** Melo

**COMPANION BILL:** [CS/SB 796](#) (Bradley)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

### Committee References

[Industries & Professional Activities](#)

14 Y, 1 N, As CS



[Commerce](#)

20 Y, 2 N

## SUMMARY

### Effect of the Bill:

The bill amends Florida's veterinary medical practice act (practice act), creating a new level of veterinary professional ("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 authorized duties and prohibitions. The bill also increases the duration of prescriptions based solely on a veterinary telehealth evaluation, allowing up to 6 months for flea and tick medications and up to 30 days for all other medications.

### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on state government and a positive fiscal impact on the private sector.

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

#### Veterinary Workforce Innovation Act

The bill names the act the "Veterinary Workforce Innovation Act." (Section [1](#))

#### Veterinary Professional Associate

The bill modifies the veterinary medical practice act ([practice act](#)), providing that the practice of educated, trained, and experienced veterinary professional associates will increase consumer access to high-quality veterinary medical services at a reasonable cost to consumers, while also increasing the efficiency of the practice of veterinary medicine in this state. (Section [2](#))

The bill creates a new level of veterinary professional – the [veterinary professional associate](#). The bill defines the veterinary professional associate as an individual who has graduated with a master's degree or the equivalent in veterinary clinical care from an accredited institution and who meets the requirements to be registered. (Section [3](#))

The bill includes registered veterinary professional associates to the exemption in the practice act that applies when administering medication or rendering auxiliary or supporting assistance under the responsible supervision of a licensed veterinarian. (Section [5](#))

The bill creates a registration process for an applicant to be registered as a veterinary professional associate. Specifically, the bill authorizes a veterinary professional associate to apply to the Department of Business and Professional Regulation ([DBPR](#)) for registration by submitting a form prescribed by the Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board). In addition, the bill:

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**DATE:** 2/3/2026

- Requires DBPR to consider each qualified veterinary professional associate who has submitted a completed application and meets the applicable requirements.
- Requires DBPR to issue a certificate of registration to each veterinary professional associate who has graduated from the relevant accredited program and received a passing score on the relevant professional national competency examination approved by the Board.
- Requires DBPR to make the list of registrants available to the public on its website.
- Allows DBPR to suspend the registration of any veterinary professional associate who the Board determines has caused serious harm to an animal due to negligence, incompetence, or misconduct related to their duties and in a manner inconsistent with the supervising veterinarian's specific direction until the registrant completes remedial training or education directed by the Board.
- Allows DBPR to rescind the registration of any veterinary professional associate who is convicted of animal cruelty or animal fighting. (Section [6](#))

The bill prohibits individuals from holding themselves out as a registered veterinary professional associate or in any other way representing himself or herself as a veterinary professional associate unless he or she has a valid certificate of registration from DBPR. (Section [6](#))

The bill allows, unless otherwise prohibited by federal law, registered veterinary professional associates to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine or veterinary medicine to the extent that he or she is competent and has the necessary training, current knowledge, and experience to provide such care, as delegated under the responsible supervision of a licensed veterinarian. (Section [6](#))

The bill prohibits registered veterinary professional associates from doing any of the following:

- Prescribing a controlled substance listed in [s. 893.03, F.S.](#), except 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, except that a veterinary professional associate may perform an orchiectomy,<sup>1</sup> veterinary dental surgery, or veterinary suturing or stapling of skin lacerations, gingival incisions, or existing surgical incisions. (Section [6](#))

The bill allows a registered veterinary professional associate to administer [rabies vaccinations](#). (Section [7](#))

### **Veterinary Telehealth Prescriptions**

The bill increases the timeframe for prescriptions via veterinary telehealth from:

- 1 month to 6 months for flea and tick medication; and
- 4 days to 30 days for other animal drugs. (Section [4](#))

### **Effective Date**

The effective date of the bill is January 1, 2027. (Section [8](#))

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

#### **STATE GOVERNMENT:**

Indeterminate. Creating and administering the registration program for veterinary professional associates may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on DBPR. It is unknown how many people will apply for a certificate of registration.

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<sup>1</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 Orchiectomy*, [https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/10/TVP-2022-1112\\_Orchiectomy.pdf](https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/10/TVP-2022-1112_Orchiectomy.pdf) (last visited January 20, 2026).

**PRIVATE SECTOR:**

Indeterminate. The bill may have in indeterminate positive economic impact on the private sector. The bill will allow a new class of midlevel practitioners in veterinary medicine. This may lead to additional jobs, and cost savings related to improved veterinary care.

## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

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

The Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board) in 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>2</sup>

The practice act provides that the practice of veterinary medicine is potentially dangerous to the public health and safety if conducted by incompetent and unlicensed practitioners. The practice act ensures that every veterinarian practicing in this state meet minimum requirements for safe practice. It is the legislative intent that veterinarians who are not normally competent or who otherwise present a danger to the public must be disciplined or prohibited from practicing in this state.<sup>3</sup>

A “veterinarian” is a health care practitioner licensed by the Board to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in Florida<sup>4</sup> and they are subject to disciplinary action from the Board for various violations of the practice act.<sup>5</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>6</sup>

Veterinary medicine includes, with respect to animals:<sup>7</sup>

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

The practice act does not apply to the following categories of persons:

- Veterinary aides, nurses, laboratory technicians, preceptors,<sup>8</sup> or other employees of a licensed veterinarian, who administer medication or provide help or support under the responsible supervision<sup>9</sup> of a licensed veterinarian;

<sup>2</sup> S. [474.201](#), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> S. [474.201](#), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> S. [474.202\(11\)](#), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Ss. [474.213](#) & [474.214](#), F.S.

<sup>6</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>7</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>8</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 also <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/preceptor#medicalDictionary> (last visited Jan. 29, 2026).

- Certain non-Florida licensed veterinarians who are consulting upon request of a Florida-licensed veterinarian on the treatment of a specific animal or on the treatment on a specific case of the animals of a single owner.
- Faculty veterinarians when they have assigned teaching duties at accredited<sup>10</sup> institutions;
- Certain graduated intern/resident veterinarians of accredited institutions;
- Certain students in a school or college of veterinary medicine who perform assigned duties by an instructor or work as preceptors;
- Certain doctors of veterinary medicine employed by a state agency or the United States Government;
- Persons or their employees caring for the persons' own animals, as well as certain part-time or temporary employees, or independent contractors, who are hired by an owner to help with herd management and animal husbandry tasks; and
- Certain entities or persons<sup>11</sup> that conduct experiments and scientific research on animals as part of the development of pharmaceuticals, biologicals, serums, or methods of treatment 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.<sup>12</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>13</sup>

Veterinary tasks requiring immediate supervision, include:<sup>14</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.

Veterinary tasks that may be performed without the licensed veterinarian on the premises, include:<sup>15</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, directed by the licensed veterinarian.

Responsible supervision means "the control, direction, and regulation by a licensed doctor of veterinary medicine of the duties involving veterinary services which she or he delegates to unlicensed personnel."<sup>16</sup>

### **Veterinary Telehealth**

In 2024, the Legislature created and passed the Providing Equity in Telehealth Services Act (PETS act), authorizing the practice of veterinary telehealth.<sup>17</sup> The PETS act allows veterinarians who hold current licenses to practice veterinary telehealth.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> S. [474.203\(1\)-\(2\), 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.

<sup>11</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 ...."

<sup>12</sup> See [s. 474.203, F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> S. [474.202\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> R. [61G18-17.005, F.A.C.](#)

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> S. [474.202\(10\), F.S.](#)

<sup>17</sup> Ch. 2024-260, Laws of Fla. (codified at s. [474.2021, F.S.](#), effective July 1, 2024).

<sup>18</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

### Limitations

The PETS act placed certain limitations on what veterinarians are able to do via telehealth, including:

- Requiring veterinarians to provide certain information to the client, including the veterinarian's name, license number and contact information;
- Requiring veterinarians to prescribe all drugs and medications in accordance with federal and state laws;
- Prohibiting veterinarians from ordering or prescribing 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;
- Prohibiting the use of veterinary telehealth to prescribe a controlled substance as defined in ch. 893, F.S. (Drug Abuse Preventions 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;
- Prohibiting prescribing 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.

### Telehealth Prescriptions

Prescriptions based solely on a telehealth evaluation may be issued for up to 1 month for products labeled solely for flea and tick control and up to 14 days of treatment for other animal drugs.<sup>19</sup> Prescriptions based solely on a telehealth evaluation may not be renewed without an in-person examination.<sup>20</sup>

### Veterinary Professional Associates

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>21</sup> Colorado's proposition directed the creation of a regulatory scheme to license and regulate Veterinary Professional Associates.

Similar to what is being proposed in the bill, Colorado would provide this Veterinary Professional Associate a pathway for those who complete a master's degree in veterinary clinical care, or an equivalent degree determined by the state board.<sup>22</sup> This new Colorado law went into effect on January 1, 2026.<sup>23</sup>

In 2022, The Lincoln Memorial University-College of Veterinary Medicine created the first-of-its-kind Master of Veterinary Clinical Care degree.<sup>24</sup> Students can obtain this degree fully online and in as little as 3 semesters (30 credit hours).<sup>25</sup>

In 2025, Colorado State University developed a similar program that is now admitting students.<sup>26</sup> According to the Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, "a veterinary professional

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must employ sound, professional judgment to determine whether using veterinary telehealth is an appropriate method for delivering medical advice or treatment to the patient.

<sup>19</sup> Section [474.2021, F.S.](#)

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies, *State Board of Veterinary Medicine: Proposition 129*, <https://dpo.colorado.gov/Veterinary/VeterinaryProfessionalAssociates>, (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</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 13, 2026).

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Colorado State University, *About the Master of Science in Veterinary Clinical Care*, <https://vetmedbiosci.colostate.edu/vpa/>, (last visited January 13, 2026).

associate is a new role similar to a physician assistant in human medicine. This mid-level role fills a gap between veterinarians and veterinary technicians and – along with other institutional initiatives – helps address a national shortage of veterinary care, particularly in rural areas.”<sup>27</sup>

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>

### **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>29</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>30</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>31</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>32</sup>

According to the AVMA, “retention of veterinary practice staff members and attrition from the profession are ongoing and increasing.”<sup>33</sup> The AVMA found that a midlevel practitioner may not be the best option to address these concerns, and that more time should be spent on the retention of veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians.<sup>34</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

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<sup>27</sup> Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, *About the veterinary professional associate (VPA)*, <https://vetmedbiosci.colostate.edu/vpa/> (last visited Jan. 13, 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 13, 2026).

<sup>29</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,an%2067%20percent%20in%202019>. (last visited January 13, 2026).

<sup>30</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>31</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>32</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>33</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 29, 2026).

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

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>35</sup>

### **Rabies Vaccinations**

Currently, all dogs, cats, and ferrets 4 months of age or older are required to be vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian or a person authorized under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian against rabies with a vaccine that is licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for use in those species.<sup>36</sup> Upon such vaccination, the licensed veterinarian is required to provide the animal's owner and the animal control authority with a rabies vaccination certificate. The veterinarian who administers or supervises the administration of the vaccination is authorized to affix his or her signature stamp in lieu of an actual signature.<sup>37</sup>

### **RECENT LEGISLATION:**

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/SENATE SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	<a href="#">CS/HB 729</a> - Veterinary Professional Associates	Melo/ Bradley	The bill passed the House, but died in the Senate.
2024	<a href="#">HB 849</a> - Veterinary Practices	Killebrew, Buchanan/ Bradley	The bill became law on July 1, 2024.

### **OTHER RESOURCES:**

[DBPR: Veterinary Medicine Board Information](#)

[USDA: Veterinary Shortage Situations Map](#)

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<sup>35</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 29, 2026).

<sup>36</sup> [S. 828.30\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>37</sup> [S. 828.30\(3\), F.S.](#)

## BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<a href="#">Industries &amp; Professional Activities Subcommittee</a>	14 Y, 1 N, As CS	1/20/2026	Anstead	Thompson
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed the licensure and regulatory provisions for veterinary technicians, and veterinary technologists.</li> <li>• Removed the provision that increases the membership of the Board of Veterinary Medicine.</li> <li>• Removed the provisions regarding administration of medication by veterinary professional associates, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technologists.</li> <li>• Removed the provisions regarding liability of the supervising licensed veterinarian for acts or omissions of registered veterinary professional associates, veterinary technicians, or veterinary technologists.</li> </ul>			
<a href="#">Commerce Committee</a>	20 Y, 2 N	2/3/2026	Hamon	Thompson

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**THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.**  
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