

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to veterinary medicine; providing a short title; amending s. 474.201, F.S.; revising legislative findings, intent, and purpose; amending s. 474.202, F.S.; defining the term "veterinary professional associate"; amending s. 474.2021, F.S.; increasing the amount of time for which prescriptions based solely on a veterinary telehealth evaluation may be issued for certain drugs; amending s. 474.203, F.S.; revising the applicability of certain exemptions; creating s. 474.2126, F.S.; providing requirements for veterinary professional associates to receive certificates of registration from the Department of Business and Professional Regulation; requiring the department to make a list of veterinary professional associate registrants publicly available on its website; authorizing the department to suspend the registration of a veterinary professional associate upon a certain determination by the Board of Veterinary Medicine; authorizing the department to rescind the registration of a veterinary professional associate under certain circumstances; prohibiting a person from holding himself or herself out as a veterinary professional associate under certain circumstances; authorizing a registered veterinary

26 professional associate to engage in the practice of
27 veterinary medicine under certain circumstances;
28 prohibiting a registered veterinary professional
29 associate from taking certain actions; providing
30 exceptions; amending s. 828.30, F.S.; conforming
31 provisions to changes made by the act; providing an
32 effective date.

33
34 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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36 **Section 1.** This act may be cited as the "Veterinary
37 Workforce Innovation Act."

38 **Section 2. Section 474.201, Florida Statutes, is amended**
39 **to read:**

40 474.201 Legislative findings, intent, and purpose.—

41 (1) The Legislature finds that the practice of veterinary
42 medicine is potentially dangerous to the public health and
43 safety if conducted by incompetent and unlicensed practitioners.
44 The legislative purpose in enacting this chapter is to ensure
45 that every veterinarian practicing in this state meet minimum
46 requirements for safe practice. It is the legislative intent
47 that veterinarians who are not normally competent or who
48 otherwise present a danger to the public ~~shall~~ be disciplined or
49 prohibited from practicing in this state.

50 (2) The Legislature finds that the practice of educated,

51 trained, and experienced veterinary professional associates will
52 increase consumer access to high-quality veterinary medical
53 services at a reasonable cost to consumers, while also
54 increasing the efficiency of the practice of veterinary medicine
55 in this state.

56 **Section 3. Present subsection (14) of section 474.202, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (15), and a new subsection (14) is added to that section, to read:**

57 474.202 Definitions.—As used in this chapter:

58 (14) "Veterinary professional associate" means 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 by the department.

59 **Section 4. Subsection (4) of section 474.2021, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

60 474.2021 Veterinary telehealth.—

61 (4) A veterinarian practicing veterinary telehealth:

62 (a) May not engage in the practice of veterinary telehealth unless it is within the context of a veterinarian/client/patient relationship;

63 (b) Shall practice in a manner consistent with his or her scope of practice and the prevailing professional standard of practice for a veterinarian who provides in-person veterinary services to patients in this state and shall employ sound,

76 professional judgment to determine whether using veterinary
77 telehealth is an appropriate method for delivering medical
78 advice or treatment to the patient;

79 (c) May use veterinary telehealth to perform an initial
80 patient evaluation to establish the veterinarian/client/patient
81 relationship if the evaluation is conducted using synchronous,
82 audiovisual communication. The evaluation may not be performed
83 using audio-only communications, text messaging, questionnaires,
84 chatbots, or other similar means. If a veterinarian practicing
85 telehealth conducts a patient evaluation sufficient to diagnose
86 and treat the patient, the veterinarian is not required to
87 research a patient's medical history or conduct a physical
88 examination of the patient before using veterinary telehealth to
89 provide a veterinary health care service to the patient;

90 (d) If the initial patient evaluation is performed using
91 veterinary telehealth, must provide the client with a statement
92 containing the veterinarian's name, license number, and contact
93 information and the contact information for at least one
94 physical veterinary clinic in the vicinity of the patient's
95 location and instructions for how to receive patient follow-up
96 care or assistance if the veterinarian and client are unable to
97 communicate because of a technological or equipment failure or
98 if there is an adverse reaction to treatment, and inform the
99 client that, if medication is prescribed, the client may obtain
100 a prescription that may be filled at the pharmacy of his or her

101 choice. The veterinarian shall obtain from the client a signed
102 and dated statement indicating the client has received the
103 required information before practicing veterinary telehealth;

104 (e) Shall prescribe all drugs and medications in
105 accordance with all federal and state laws and the following
106 requirements:

107 1. A veterinarian practicing veterinary telehealth may
108 order, prescribe, or make available medicinal drugs or drugs
109 specifically approved for use in animals by the United States
110 Food and Drug Administration, the use of which conforms to the
111 approved labeling. Prescriptions based solely on a telehealth
112 evaluation may be issued for up to 6 months ~~1 month~~ for products
113 labeled solely for flea and tick control and up to 30 ~~14~~ days of
114 treatment for other animal drugs. Prescriptions based solely on
115 a telehealth evaluation may not be renewed without an in-person
116 examination.

117 2. A veterinarian practicing veterinary telehealth may not
118 order, prescribe, or make available medicinal drugs or drugs as
119 defined in s. 465.003 approved by the United States Food and
120 Drug Administration for human use or compounded antibacterial,
121 antifungal, antiviral, or antiparasitic medications, unless the
122 veterinarian has conducted an in-person physical examination of
123 the animal or made medically appropriate and timely visits to
124 the premises where the animal is kept.

125 3. A veterinarian may not use veterinary telehealth to

126 prescribe a controlled substance as defined in chapter 893
127 unless the veterinarian has conducted an in-person physical
128 examination of the animal or made medically appropriate and
129 timely visits within the past year to the premises where the
130 animal is kept.

131 4. A veterinarian practicing veterinary telehealth may not
132 prescribe a drug or other medication for use on a horse engaged
133 in racing or training at a facility under the jurisdiction of
134 the Florida Gaming Control Commission or on a horse that is a
135 covered horse as defined in the federal Horseracing Integrity
136 and Safety Act, 15 U.S.C. ss. 3051 et seq.;

137 (f) Shall be familiar with available veterinary resources,
138 including emergency resources, near the patient's location and
139 be able to provide the client with a list of nearby
140 veterinarians who may be able to see the patient in person upon
141 the request of the client;

142 (g) Shall keep, maintain, and make available a summary of
143 the patient record as provided in s. 474.2165; and

144 (h) May not use veterinary telehealth to issue an
145 international or interstate travel certificate or a certificate
146 of veterinary inspection.

147 **Section 5. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) and subsection**
148 **(7) of section 474.203, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

149 474.203 Exemptions.—This chapter does not apply to:

150 (5) (a) Any person, or the person's regular employee,

151 administering to the ills or injuries of her or his own animals,
152 including, but not limited to, castration, spaying, and
153 dehorning of herd animals, unless title is transferred or
154 employment provided for the purpose of circumventing this law.
155 This exemption does not apply to any person licensed as a
156 veterinarian in another state or foreign jurisdiction and
157 practicing temporarily in this state. However, except as
158 provided in s. 474.2126 or s. 828.30, only a veterinarian may
159 immunize or treat an animal for diseases that are communicable
160 to humans and that are of public health significance.

161 (7) Any veterinary aide, nurse, laboratory technician,
162 preceptor, person registered pursuant to s. 474.2126, or other
163 employee of a licensed veterinarian who administers medication
164 or who renders auxiliary or supporting assistance under the
165 responsible supervision of a licensed veterinarian, including
166 those tasks identified by rule of the board requiring immediate
167 supervision, provided that a registered veterinary professional
168 associate is subject to s. 474.2126. However, the licensed
169 veterinarian is responsible for all such acts performed under
170 this subsection by persons under her or his supervision.

171
172 For the purposes of chapters 465 and 893, persons exempt
173 pursuant to subsection (1), subsection (2), or subsection (4)
174 are deemed to be duly licensed practitioners authorized by the
175 laws of this state to prescribe drugs or medicinal supplies.

176 **Section 6. Section 474.2126, Florida Statutes, is created**
177 **to read:**

178 474.2126 Veterinary professional associates;
179 registration.—

180 (1) REGISTRATION.—

181 (a) A veterinary professional associate may apply to the
182 department for registration by submitting a form prescribed by
183 the board. The department shall consider for registration each
184 qualified veterinary professional associate who the department
185 verifies has submitted a completed application and meets the
186 applicable requirements of this subsection.

187 (b) The department shall issue a certificate of
188 registration to each veterinary professional associate applicant
189 who the department verifies has graduated from the relevant
190 accredited program and received a passing score on the relevant
191 professional national competency examination approved by the
192 board.

193 (c) The department shall make a list of registrants
194 available to the public on the department's website.

195 (d) The department may suspend the registration of any
196 veterinary professional associate who the board determines has
197 caused serious harm to an animal due to negligence,
198 incompetence, or misconduct related to duties performed under
199 this section and in a manner inconsistent with the supervising
200 veterinarian's specific direction, until such time as the

201 registrant has completed remedial training or education directed
202 by the board.

203 (e) The department may rescind the registration of any
204 veterinary professional associate who is convicted of animal
205 cruelty under s. 828.12 or animal fighting under s. 828.122.

206 (2) PROHIBITION.—An individual may not hold himself or
207 herself out as a registered veterinary professional associate or
208 in any other way represent himself or herself as a veterinary
209 professional associate unless he or she has a valid certificate
210 of registration from the department.

211 (3) DUTIES AND ACTIONS OF A REGISTERED VETERINARY
212 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE.—

213 (a) Unless otherwise prohibited by federal law, a
214 registered veterinary professional associate may engage in the
215 practice of veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202 or
216 veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202, to the extent that
217 he or she is competent and has the necessary training, current
218 knowledge, and experience to provide such care, as delegated
219 under the responsible supervision, as defined in s. 474.202, of
220 a licensed veterinarian.

221 (b) A registered veterinary professional associate may not
222 do any of the following:

223 1. Prescribe a controlled substance listed in s. 893.03,
224 except that a registered veterinary professional associate may
225 perform humane euthanasia and prepare, log, and administer

226 controlled substances for the purpose of analgesia, anesthesia,
227 or humane euthanasia, as delegated by a licensed veterinarian
228 and performed under responsible supervision.

229 2. Perform a surgical procedure, except that a veterinary
230 professional associate may perform the following surgical
231 procedures:

232 a. Orchiectomy;
233 b. Veterinary dental surgery; or
234 c. Veterinary suturing or stapling of skin lacerations,
235 gingival incisions, or existing surgical incisions.

236 **Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) and subsection**
237 **(3) of section 828.30, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

238 828.30 Rabies vaccination of dogs, cats, and ferrets.—

239 (1) (a) All dogs, cats, and ferrets 4 months of age or
240 older must be vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian or a person
241 authorized under paragraph (b) or s. 474.2126 against rabies
242 with a vaccine that is licensed by the United States Department
243 of Agriculture for use in those species.

244 (3) Upon vaccination against rabies, the licensed
245 veterinarian shall provide the animal's owner and the animal
246 control authority with a rabies vaccination certificate. Each
247 animal control authority and veterinarian shall use the "Rabies
248 Vaccination Certificate" of the National Association of State
249 Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) or an equivalent form
250 approved by the local government that contains all the

251 information required by the NASPHV Rabies Vaccination
252 Certificate. The veterinarian who administers the rabies
253 vaccination or who supervises the administration of the rabies
254 vaccination as provided in paragraph (1)(b) or s. 474.2126 to an
255 animal as authorized under this section may affix his or her
256 signature stamp in lieu of an actual signature.

257 **Section 8.** This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.