



Wyoming Livestock Board

"Safeguarding Wyoming's Livestock Industry Today and for the Future"

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Wyoming Veterinary loan repayment program August 14, 2008

Wyoming is facing a shortage of large animal and food animal veterinarians as is the rest of the nation. As veterinarians age or change the focus of practice to more lucrative small animal practice, the ranching and farming communities across the nation find food animal services more difficult to obtain. Many states have addressed this shortage by providing incentives for food animal veterinarians to come to their states to practice. With average debt load for a new graduate of \$120-\$170,000.00 there has to be a mechanism to ease the burden of loan repayment. The starting salary for new graduates in Wyoming is \$30-\$40,000.00 per year. This does not allow a decent standard of living as well as repay loans at the rate of \$12,000.00-\$15,000.00 per year.

The Wyoming legislature provided in the 2008 session a means of recruiting new food animal veterinarians and keeping existing food animal veterinarians within the State.

Rep. Dan Zwonitzer sponsored a bill (HB 74) that provides \$270,000.00 for 2 years to aid in the repayment of educational loans to veterinarians who practice food animal medicine in underserved areas of the State. The law states that the Wyoming Livestock Board in consultation with the Wyoming Veterinary Medical Associations and Wyoming Veterinary Licensing Board provide monies for educational loan repayment.

The statute provides loan repayment to Wyoming licensed veterinarians who have practiced food animal medicine in the State for 6 months. These veterinarians who have applied and are selected by the Wyoming Livestock Board are eligible for up to \$30,000.00 per year for 3 years. "Food animals" are defined as cattle, swine, sheep or goats. The veterinarians must be U.S. citizens and have graduated from an accredited veterinary college.

No state money shall be expended for repayment of any loan unless 25% of the money is matched with other funds in any combination from any county, city, veterinary clinic, animal care facility, state agency, university, laboratory or veterinary clinic.

The Board shall select recipients based on the following criteria: the area in the state being served, percentage of food animal practice, the amount of educational expense and whether the recipient has a committed sponsor to provide 25% of the grants matching funds.

The American Veterinary Medical Association has provided guidelines as to percentages of food animal practice in Wyoming, as well as defining underserved areas in the State. This map may be accessed at www.avma.org/fsvm/maps/wy.asp.

The loans will probably be granted on a 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% of food animal medicine. For example; if a veterinarian spends 50% of their time practicing food animal medicine, they would

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be eligible for a loan repayment grant of \$15,000.00 per year. This amount would be \$11,250.00 State funds and \$3750.00 sponsor funds per year. This amount could change through the life of a 3 year contract, if other factors occur, such as the percent of food animal practice changes or a new sponsor is obtained.

State funding is in the amount of \$270,000.00, the sponsor matching fund would amount to \$90,000. The total amount available for the biennium would be \$360,000.00. To assure that the program will be adequately funded for the biennium, probably \$120,000 will be spent the first year, with the remainder spent the second year to cover existing grants and hopefully a second crop of new veterinarians in 2010. With this formula, it is expected that the board and sponsors could fund 4-6 positions a year for 2 years. A request for funding has been included in the exception biennial budget for 2011-2012.

The grant amount would be paid to the selected recipient as a yearly one time payment. The selected recipient may be asked to provide proof that the payment actually was made to the institution listed on the loan application.

This program is brand new in Wyoming. The Wyoming Livestock Board and staff are working diligently to make this a program that will attract new food animal veterinarians and keep existing food animal veterinarians in the state. If the Board can place or keep 4-6 veterinarians a year for the next 2 years there is hope the shortage of food animal service can be addressed in Wyoming.

Fred Emerich DVM, Field Veterinarian, Wyoming Livestock Board

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