

**Issue:**

South Dakota law specifies the animal care practices that constitute the practice of veterinary medicine. Anyone practicing veterinary medicine without a license is guilty of a class 2 misdemeanor.

Some individuals who are not veterinarians provide livestock care services - such as heifer spaying or pregnancy testing - for a fee to neighbors. In order to do this legally under South Dakota law, those individuals would have to be registered as a veterinary livestock assistant and work under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

**Background:**

State Law:

SDCL 36-12-1 reads: *Any person shall be deemed in the practice of veterinary medicine who represents himself as or is engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine in any of its branches either directly or indirectly, or uses any words, titles, or letters, to title so as to signify that he is a veterinarian, or who for a fee diagnoses, prescribes or administers any drug, medicine, appliance, application, or treatment of whatever nature, or performs a surgical operation or manipulation, or conducts any autopsy or biopsy, for the prevention, cure, or relief of a pain, deformity, wound, fracture, or bodily injury, or physical condition or disease of animals, and the term animals as used in this section shall mean all animals other than man, except that this section shall not be applicable to the advertising or the sale of foods and medicines used in commercial feeds for the prevention of livestock diseases.*

Restrictions on practicing veterinary medicine do not apply to farmers and ranchers treating their own livestock or their regular employees, or to people providing a free service. Scientific research, educational research, and poultry are also excluded from the statute.

Veterinary worker shortage:

A recent study commissioned by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) indicates that the demand for food supply veterinarians will increase by about 13 percent over the next several years, while the supply will fall short of what is needed by about 4-5 percent annually. The number of veterinary school graduates entering food supply medicine remains stagnant.

**SD Farm Bureau Policy:**

*Ag Regulation - Livestock*

Procedures known and designated as castrating, spaying, dehorning, and pregnancy testing of cattle, sheep or horses, and swine, should not be considered the practice of Veterinary medicine within the meaning of state law.

A producer's right to administer vaccinations, wormers, and other medications to the animals on his farm, ranch, or kennel should be protected.

**Questions:**

1. Are South Dakota livestock producers experiencing a shortage of food supply veterinarians?
2. What changes, if any, should be made to the current Veterinary Practices Act?
3. Should South Dakota Farm Bureau work with other agricultural groups to develop a certification program for certain "veterinary practices" such as heifer spaying, embryo transfer, etc.?