

Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form

To be completed by the chief State or Insular Area Animal Health Official or his/her designee

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP)

Nomination of Veterinarian Shortage Situations for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Authorized Under the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (NVMSA)

Note: Please submit one separate nomination form for each position. See solicitation for number of nominations permitted for your state or insular area.

Location of Veterinary Shortage Area for this Nomination

Note: If this nomination is for a public practice position, please provide the location of the home office or the center of service area.

Location of Veterinary Shortage: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM)
(e.g., County, State/Insular Area)

Center of Service Area or
 Location of Position: 116 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05620
(e.g., Address or Cross Street, Town/City, and Zip Code)

Type of Veterinary Practice Area/Discipline/Specialty

Type I Shortage: Private Practice
 Food Animal Medicine (at least 80 percent time)
 Please select **one or more** specialties requested for this position:

- Beef Cattle
- Dairy Cattle
- Swine
- Poultry
- Small Ruminant
- Other _____

Type II Shortage: Private Practice – Rural Area
 Food Animal Medicine (at least 30 percent time)
 Please select **one or more** specialties requested for this position:

- Beef Cattle
- Dairy Cattle
- Swine
- Poultry
- Small ruminant
- Other : camelid

Type III Shortage: Public Practice (at least 49 percent time*)
 Employer: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Position Title: Assistant State Veterinarian
 Please select **one or more** specialty/disciplinary areas.

- Food Safety
- Public Health
- Epidemiology

Other: Emergency management, livestock health, prevention of FAD and zoonotic disease introduction

Please describe the objectives of a veterinarian meeting this shortage situation as well as being located in the community, area, state/insular area, or position requested above (limit your response to 200 words or less).

It is the primary responsibility of the Assistant State Veterinarian to manage the day to day operations of the animal health section of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture (VAAFM). This responsibility results from the State Veterinarian's time having to be split evenly between animal health activities and those associated with duties of her Director title. Hence, the assistant state veterinarian is the top management level position within VAAFM whose responsibilities relate solely to animal health. The primary objectives of the veterinarian in this position include the following:

- **Protect public health**
- **Protect food safety**
- **Protect and promote the economic viability of Vermont's animal agriculture industries through successful education, technical assistance, and prudent regulation/enforcement**
- **Prevent the introduction of Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) and the spread of domestic and FAD from index herds/flocks to other susceptible livestock and poultry populations**
- **Provide assistance to, and protect Vermonters and their livestock/companion animals from, the deleterious effects of manmade and natural disasters**

These objectives are best accomplished through close collaboration with internal VAAFM co-workers, other state colleagues such as officials in the Vermont Department of Health and the University of Vermont Extension Service, and colleagues in other states and the federal government.

Please describe the activities of a veterinarian meeting this shortage situation and being located in the community, area, state/insular area, or position requested above (limit your response to 200 words or less).

The individual filling this position will be expected to devote at least 80% of his or her professional time (32 hrs/week) to the activities listed under the Type 111 Shortage category above. Those activities are numerous and varied and exceed the allowance in this submission, but some of the most essential activities are listed below:

- **Enforce the disease testing and livestock interstate movement regulations within Vermont**
- **Assist with dispositions of retained carcass at Vermont's state and federally inspected slaughterhouses**
- **Work with state-level veterinary and physician colleagues to determine the origin of food-borne human illness when outbreaks are suspected of originating from animal-based food products**
- **Maintain a presence, and perform regulatory duties, at all Vermont agricultural events, including fairs, bird swaps, farmers markets and trade shows to help promote an understanding of Vermont's animal related laws and regulations**
- **Assist law enforcement and humane societies in the criminal investigation of livestock cruelty and abuse cases**
- **Investigate veterinary and producer reports of disease outbreaks in livestock and poultry populations to ensure no evidence of FAD and to limit spread through issuance of quarantines when warranted**
- **Draft, update and exercise applicable emergency plans including the National Veterinary Stockpile plan, the SSF11 plan and its Animal Disaster Emergency Preparedness Annex, the Highly Contagious Disease Plan and the Avian Influenza Plan.**
- **Provide expertise to local, state and federal emergency management colleagues during disasters that affect animals**

Please describe any past efforts to recruit and retain a veterinarian in the shortage situation identified above (limit your response to 100 words or less).

VAAFM has made an effort to recruit and retain an assistant state veterinarian twice in the last 18 months, including an effort that is underway at the time of this writing. VAAFM veterinary salaries are below the national average, as compared to colleagues in other states performing similar duties. This was evidenced by a recent informal survey that was done as part of a 2010 National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials initiative. Conversely, the cost of living in Vermont is higher than the national average. The last VAAFM assistant state veterinarian hired in October 2010 left the position after only 15 months of employment due to the ability to secure a higher salary and more lucrative benefits elsewhere in the federal government. Additionally, during that recruitment effort, two qualified veterinarians declined interviews due to the proposed starting salary. During the current recruitment effort, the most qualified candidate is struggling to justify a cross-country relocation with current deferred student loan burden and a salary that is not commensurate with her skills or experience and that is limited by a state budget which has undergone significant rescissions during the last three years. Even if VAAFM is successful in recruiting a qualified veterinarian, the ability to retain him or her without an educational loan repayment incentive is uncertain.

Please describe the risk of this veterinarian position not being secured or retained. Include the risk(s) to the production of a safe and wholesome food supply and to animal, human, and environmental health not only in the community but in the region, state/insular area, nation, and/or international community (limit your response to 250 words or less).

Again, it is likely that VAAFM will have secured an assistant state veterinarian by the time that this submission is reviewed, but the likelihood of retaining the individual over a productive period of time is not high due to state budget constraints and a competitive employment market. In order for VAAFM to begin to see a return on its time investment with any new professional employee, that individual needs to be retained for a minimum of three to five years, and longer is preferable. An employment period that is shorter than that results in important projects initiated to achieve the goals referenced above having to be set aside temporarily or abandoned all together. Additionally, frequent turnover in the position does not allow the veterinarian to develop a working relationship with, and gain the trust of, the regulated community, producers and stakeholders that he or she serves, thereby lessening the frequency with which these stakeholders reach out to the veterinary staff employed by VAAFM. This erosive disconnect can increase the chance that a highly contagious disease remains undetected for an extended period, lessen the security of the local food supply, and increase the potential for the livestock and pet owning populations to remain in need during manmade and natural emergencies that impact animals. Because of the relatively small size of New England and the robust interstate and international (through Vermont's border with Canada) movement of livestock and their products, allowing the assistant state veterinary position to remain unfilled or to turn over at an unacceptable rate could have regional and international repercussions as well as intrastate ones.

Please indicate whether you consider this situation/position a candidate for a "service in emergency" agreement (limit your response to 100 words or less). Please see solicitations for additional information regarding the obligation of participants who enter into the "Service in Emergency" agreement.

N/A

Authorized State or Insular Area Animal Health Official or designee:

Name: Kristin M. Haas, DVM

Title: Vermont State Veterinarian; Director of Food Safety and Consumer protection

Organization: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
kristin.haas@state.vt.us

Email: (802)828-2426

Telephone Number: _____
 (Area code required)

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