



North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association

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I am speaking on behalf of the 300 members of the North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association in support of the proposal to create an analytical veterinary epidemiologist faculty position within the Extension Service, working with the Senator Bill Bowman Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at North Dakota State University. The NDVMA supports the testimony offered to SBARE last month by Dr. Brett Webb, the laboratory's Director, and Dr. Charles Stoltenow, Assistant Director of NDSU Extension.

Veterinary epidemiology is the study of animal disease transmission, control, and prevention, to enhance animal and human health. A veterinary epidemiologist is a graduate veterinarian who has been certified by the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. The board certification process involves at least four years of relevant postdoctoral training and work experience, authorship of at least one scientific publication, and passing two comprehensive written examinations.

An analytical epidemiologist would work closely with the other professional staff at the diagnostic laboratory to analyze data, identify trends, and disseminate evidence-based information and educational programs to veterinarians, animal owners, and the public. This information would be of great value in controlling animal disease and enhancing livestock productivity. Further, given the fact that many diseases can involve both animals and people, information provided by a veterinary epidemiologist would be important in protecting public health. An epidemiologist would also analyze antimicrobial susceptibility data generated by the diagnostic laboratory, and the resulting reports would aid veterinarians in ensuring the responsible use of antimicrobials to treat infectious diseases in animals.

There are fewer than 300 practicing veterinarians in North Dakota, but they are responsible for working with their clients in protecting the health and welfare of many thousands of animals. The diagnostic laboratory offers a critical service to veterinarians by providing them with accurate and timely diagnostic reports from individual cases submitted to the laboratory. A diagnostic epidemiologist would take the information in these individual reports, compile and analyze the data, identify trends, and make the information available to veterinarians and others. A key component is that the information would be evidence-based, meaning it would be derived from actual laboratory reports and not based on impressions or second-hand information. This work is fully consistent with the mission of NDSU Extension.

The addition of an analytical veterinary epidemiologist in NDSU Extension and working with the Senator Bill Bowman Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, would enhance animal and human health in this state and in the surrounding region.