

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023**

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HOUSE BILL 1052

Short Title: Livestock Veterinary Care Access/Telemedicine. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Jeffers.

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Wildlife Resources, if favorable, Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

May 7, 2024

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE LIVESTOCK VETERINARY CARE ACCESS AND
TELEMEDICINE PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
CONSUMER SERVICES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Findings. – The General Assembly finds that the lack of access to veterinary services for livestock farmers in rural and economically distressed areas has resulted in serious and substantial impacts on the ability of these farmers to remain in operation. The General Assembly further finds that financial assistance to rural veterinarians and to support telemedicine initiatives to connect veterinary services in adequately served areas of the State with underserved areas will mitigate and in some cases eliminate these impacts.

SECTION 2.(a) Appropriation. – The sum of three million dollars (\$3,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Department) to establish the Livestock Veterinary Care Access Program (Program) to provide support for the recruiting and retention of current and prospective veterinarians in portions of the State that are currently underserved for livestock veterinary services, in coordination with other federal, State, or privately funded programs that address access to livestock veterinary care in rural and economically distressed areas. This support may include loan forgiveness programs, cost-share assistance for equipment purchases and other expenditures associated with establishing and maintaining a livestock veterinary practice, and subsidies for veterinary services provided to economically distressed or disadvantaged livestock farmers.

SECTION 2.(b) Record Keeping and Report. – The Department shall collect and maintain data on the length of time veterinarians receiving support under the Program remain employed within the same county or an adjacent county as the practice site selected for the veterinarian's service commitment. No later than October 1 of each year, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division on the use of funds appropriated by this section. The report shall include at least all of the following:

- (1) A list of expenditures funded by State appropriations.
- (2) The total number of additional licensed veterinarians who received incentives funded by this section, broken down by practice site, development tier designation of the county where the practice site is located, and the type and amount of incentive provided to each veterinarian.



1 (3) The length of time each program participant remains employed at a practice
2 site in a rural or economically distressed area.

3 (4) Recommendations for improving recruitment and retention efforts.

4 **SECTION 2.(c)** Future Funding. – It is the intent of the General Assembly to
5 appropriate to the Livestock Veterinary Care Access Program established by this section the sum
6 of five one hundredths of one percent (0.05%) of the total funds appropriated for the current
7 operations and capital improvement needs of the State in the previous fiscal year's Current
8 Operations Appropriations Act.

9 **SECTION 3.(a)** Appropriation to Telemedicine for Livestock Health. – The sum of
10 one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated
11 from the General Fund to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to partner with
12 the College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University to establish the
13 Telemedicine for Livestock Health Program (Telemedicine Program). The Telemedicine
14 Program will provide financial support for information technology and personal services costs to
15 provide veterinary telehealth for support of livestock farmers in underserved and economically
16 disadvantaged areas of the State, consistent with regulations of the Veterinary Medical Board
17 issued under the authority set forth in G.S. 90-186(10). The Department may enter into a contract
18 with one or more existing veterinary telehealth providers to carry out the Telemedicine Program.

19 **SECTION 3.(b)** Record Keeping and Report. – The Department shall collect and
20 maintain data on the Telemedicine Program established by this section. No later than October 1
21 of each year, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
22 Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources and the Fiscal Research Division on the use of
23 funds appropriated by this section. The report shall include at least all of the following:

24 (1) A list of expenditures funded by State appropriations.

25 (2) The total number of rural and economically distressed or disadvantaged
26 livestock farmers served by the Telemedicine Program.

27 (3) Recommendations for improving access to veterinary telehealth efforts in
28 rural and economically disadvantaged areas of the State.

29 **SECTION 4.** Administrative Costs. – The Department may use up to three percent
30 (3%) of the funds appropriated by this act for technical and administrative support provided to
31 the Livestock Veterinary Care Access Program and Telemedicine for Livestock Health Program
32 established by this act.

33 **SECTION 5.** Effective Date. – This act becomes effective July 1, 2024.