



NEWS RELEASE

Texas Animal Health Commission

"Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA Announces One Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Award in Texas

Austin, TX – The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awarded 48 American veterinarians the VMLRP award to help repay a portion of their veterinary school loans in return for serving in areas lacking sufficient veterinary resources.

One Texas veterinarian was awarded the VMLRP award this year and will be fulfilling the shortage of public practice (Type III) needs in Brazos County. Type III awards are limited to 10 percent of total nominations and available funds.

While the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) does not administer the VMLRP loan, each year the TAHC solicits input from a broad range of stakeholders including veterinarians, veterinary educators, livestock producers, and the public to identify which geographic areas of Texas to nominate for the VMLRP. A total of eight shortage areas in Texas were identified in 2016, of which six were Type II and two were Type III.

"The public veterinarian shortage situation in Brazos County comes from difficulty in recruitment and retention, with prolonged searches and even an inability to fill vacancies in the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL)," said Dr. Bruce Akey, TVMDL Director. "The trend has increasingly been to fill positions with non-veterinarians due to an inability to attract qualified or interested veterinarians, resulting in a loss of critical clinical expertise."

Due to the size of the animal agriculture industries in Texas, this shortage poses a risk beyond the state borders, as animals and animal products move across state lines daily, and are traded internationally.

A [map of veterinary service shortage areas](#) by state is available online.

In its seventh year of operation, the VMLRP program helps qualified veterinarians repay up to \$75,000 of debt they incurred while pursuing their veterinary medicine degrees in return for three years of veterinary service in a designated veterinary shortage area. Participants are required to serve in one of the three types of shortage situations.

- Type I are private practices dedicated to food animal medicine at least 80 percent of the time.
- Type II are private practices in rural areas dedicated to food animal medicine up to 30 percent of the time.
- Type III are dedicated to public practice up to 49 percent of the time.

For more information contact the VMLRP via email at vmlrp@nifa.usda.gov. Comments or questions related to the designated shortage areas may be directed to susan.culp@tahc.texas.gov.

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