



June 2021 Bulletin

State of Nevada Board of Veterinary

Veterinary Staff Shortages and Burnout

COVID-19 and the pandemic have changed a lot of things about the world and the veterinary community has felt those changes acutely. Communication with clients, physical examinations, an increase in new patients, and expectations from clients are all sectors where things have changed significantly in the last 18 months. But, to most of you, this isn't news. The veterinary community has been steadily feeling the strain of an increase in clients and a decrease in available staff for years. The pandemic just made the symptoms of this problem clearer.

Concepts like compassion fatigue, burnout, and depression are not new but the pandemic and the changes that it required to practices brought to the forefront issues that were less obvious just over a year ago.

Now that we are starting to peek our heads out from the pandemic, there are still many unanswered questions as to what that emergence will look like and what can practitioners and staff do to keep their heads above water. Ultimately, the growth of the veterinary industry is not going to slow anytime soon. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts a 16% growth in veterinary and veterinary technician positions by 2029¹ (four times that of the average for other positions). Short staffing is now commonplace at most clinics even with active solicitation of open positions. All this coupled with the increase in the emotional states of clients that are feeling the strain of their own pandemic induced intensification of emotions leads to a lot of concern for the wellbeing of all those who work in the veterinary field.

There are not many clear answers when it comes to finding staff during a staffing shortage. Many of the issues that have led to a shortage include complicated factors like a high percentage of current practitioners retiring in the next 10 years, economic demands and salary stagnation, operation inefficiencies in facilities, and the annual number of veterinary field graduates.² All of these factors interplay to create a complicated system that concurrently led to staffing issues in a growing market. That strain affects everyone in the practice. But some things can be done to mitigate that strain.

The AVMA recommends changes in staffing efficiency may help make the most of the staff that is available by analyzing factors such as veterinary to non-veterinary staffing ratios. The AVMA found that on average bringing in another veterinary technician resulted in an 18.3% increase in practice efficiency and that a ratio of four veterinary technicians per veterinarian is when the practice reached maximum potential.²

Limiting staff burnout and offering practice-wide resources for mental health care will ensure that all staff can safely handle the vicissitudes that occur daily in a veterinary clinic. There are thankfully many resources of varying types for all levels of staff to utilize.



Resources can include compassion fatigue self-assessments, free CE webinars, Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Programs, help with dealing with emotional blackmail, VIN's Vets4Vets Foundation which is a free confidential support service provided by the VIN Foundation. Making these resources known to staff at all levels of a practice can help the entire veterinary team take care of themselves for a long and healthy career.

A healthy team can also help with more than just client care. Engaging staff in discussions in brainstorming sessions regarding staffing will allow staff to be engaged with facility-wide solutions and creates an atmosphere of open and effective communication. It can also help with creative solutions to better leverage team members within the clinic and solidify teamwork. All these elements can help foster solid communication, increase productivity, increase morale, and reduce staff turnover and absenteeism.

While there may not be a direct solution to solving the understaffing issue that is currently occurring, there are concrete steps that can be taken to alleviate the pressure, increase the efficiency of current staff, maintain a healthy and productive environment for staff that fosters communication and self-care, and adoptive open communication among the entire team to encourage retention and solidify a full team approach.

1. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/veterinarians.htm>

2. <https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2019-12-15/veterinarian-shortage-or-salaries-not-keeping>



What to Watch For:

➡ As the 2021 Legislative Session wraps up on May 31st , there will be a summary of bills that affect the veterinary community that will be included in an upcoming bulletin once bills are signed by the Governor

➡ The July 22 Board meeting is scheduled to be held in-person in Reno and there will be a teleconference option for those that are interested. There may be modifications of how the meeting is held if conditions with the pandemic change. Please refer to the posted agenda or contact the office for any changes or updates.

Upcoming 2021 Board Meetings:

Agendas are posted at the link below at least 3 days prior to a meeting: <https://www.nvvetboard.us>

July 22 (Reno) and October 21 (LV)

Request to join the mailing list and get information on hearings and workshops for proposed regulation changes sent directly to your inbox. Send your name and email address to:
mail@vetboard.nv.gov



ALERT: As of June 1, Real Water Inc. has agreed to cease production until they can meet FDA guidelines. Real Water issued a recall of their products earlier this year due to probable cases linked to acute non-viral hepatitis in humans.

Additionally, there have been unofficial reports of possible ingestion of Real Water by pets which could put them at risk of non-viral hepatitis as well.

It is important that if you have clients that report symptoms of non-viral hepatitis or discuss the use of alkaline waters for pets, that you are able to advise them against use due to the possible risks.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: THE IN-PERSON REQUIREMENT FOR CE FOR 2021 HAS BEEN WAIVED. ALL HOURS FOR LICENSE RENEWAL MAY BE EARNED ONLINE.



CE CORNER

Please refer to NAC 638.042 for a complete list of the types of courses approved the Board to ensure that CE you are taking is approved.

- Free AVMA seminars online: <https://axon.avma.org/page/covid19-courses>
- Registration for the 2021 AVMA Virtual Conference (courses available starting July 26) is now open: <https://www.mcisemi.com/avma2021/>
- List of 2021's Best Conference: <https://vetintegrations.com/insights/best-veterinary-conferences/>
- VetFolio is offering free CE here: https://www.vetfolio.com/learn/article/free-ce-from-vetfolio?gclid=Cj0KCQjwgJv4BRCrARIsAB17JI4ejCJgAqebu0UQV--7VZSp_-Eh_1DI9kdVhi8Ncg8k2MURexIM0OaAvegEALw_wcB
- VetMedTeam List of Free CE: <https://www.vetmedteam.com/classes-free.aspx>
- NAVTA's List of Free CE: navta.net/page/continuing_education
- Oklahoma State University is offering a June 18-19 online conference that includes both large and companion animal courses: <https://vetmed.okstate.edu/continuing-ed/seminars-and-conferences.html>
- Search for Board approved CE any time at <https://www.aavsb.org/RACE>