

Veterinarian Shortage Situation Nomination Form

To be submitted under the authority of the chief State or Insular Area Animal Health Official

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP)

This form must be used for Nomination of Veterinarian Shortage Situations to 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 shortage situation. See the State Animal Health Official section of the VMLRP web site (www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp) for the number of nominations permitted for your state or insular area.

Location of Veterinary Shortage Area for this Nomination

Location of Veterinary Shortage: Gallatin County, Montana
Approximate Center of Shortage Area (or Location of Position if Type III): Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, South 19th and Lincoln, Bozeman MT 59718

Overall Priority of Shortage: Moderate Priority High Priority x Critical Priority

Type of Veterinary Practice Area/Discipline/Specialty (Choose only one Type)

Type I Shortage: Private Practice Food Animal Medicine (awardee obligation: at least 80 percent time or 32 hr/week)

- Must cover (check at least one) May cover
Beef Cattle Dairy Cattle Swine Poultry Small Ruminant Other:
Beef Cattle Dairy Cattle Swine Poultry Small Ruminant Other:

Type II Shortage: Private Practice - Rural Area Food Animal Medicine (awardee obligation: at least 30 percent time or 12 hr/week)

- Must cover (check at least one) May cover
Beef Cattle Dairy Cattle Swine Poultry Small Ruminant Other:
Beef Cattle Dairy Cattle Swine Poultry Small Ruminant Other:

Type III Shortage: Public Practice (awardee obligation: at least 49 percent time or 19.6 hr/week)
Employer: Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Position Title: Diagnostic Veterinary Pathologist

- Please select one or more specialty/disciplinary areas:
Food Safety Public Health Epidemiology
X Other: Pathology

Please describe the **importance and objectives** of a veterinarian filling 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).

The livestock industry in Montana has 3,445,000 food animals (1) spread across 145,545 mi<sup>2</sup>, with significant interstate and international import and export activity. These figures underscore the agricultural, public health, and economic importance of Montana's food animals to the state, region, and nation. Food animal veterinarians and producers are dependent on the availability of veterinary diagnosticians and laboratory services for early, accurate diagnosis of disease. Thus, a fully staffed diagnostic laboratory is necessary to meet the needs of these practitioners and producers. The changing finances of veterinary education and low salaries make recruitment and retention of younger pathologists difficult and with two of Montana's three veterinary pathologists in the later phases of their careers, this is necessary to protect and support Montana's food animal production into the future.

Critical objectives of the state of Montana for filling this shortage situation include: 1) retention of veterinary pathologists to perform diagnostic casework (at least 50% production animals) and provide surge capacity; 2) protection of public health through participation in disease surveillance and timely, accurate reporting of animal disease information; and 3) contribution to the management of food animal production through consultation and strengthening of relationships with local food animal veterinarians and producers.

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

The primary activities of the awardee will consist of disease surveillance and diagnosis through pathological (gross and histologic) examination of animals and tissues submitted to the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (MVDL), which serves veterinarians throughout the state. The caseload is expected to include all species, with at least 50% of cases consisting of food animal species. The results of these examinations, in addition to diagnostic information from numerous other disciplines (bacteriology, virology, serology, parasitology, and toxicology) will be integrated into timely reports focused on providing clinically useful information to food animal veterinarians and producers. Additional responsibilities of the awardee will include the appropriate state and federal reporting of diseases of regulatory significance as necessary, consultation with local veterinarians, participation in the investigation of and response to disease outbreaks, defense of public health through zoonotic disease surveillance, and promotion of the laboratory and profession through scholarly activity and professional publications and presentations.

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).

Montana salaries (public and private) are low (45<sup>th</sup> of 50 states)(4), and a subject of concern in accreditation reviews of MVDL (2). MVDL has been fortunate in pathologist retention thus far, but pathologists have left due to inadequate compensation, and these individuals did not have educational debt. Given the extensive post-DVM training required and increasing education costs, recruitment/retention of pathologists is a critical problem. The most recently advertised position required 18 months to fill due to competition for a limited applicant pool (3), low salary (59%, 37%, and 30% lower than industry, diagnostic labs, and academia, respectively) (3), and above average cost of living (5). Educational debt creates additional financial hardship, which will make retention of this position extremely difficult.

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).

The livestock industry of Montana is threatened by several diseases of regulatory, zoonotic, and economic significance, including brucellosis (Greater Yellowstone Area), trichomoniasis, rabies, chronic wasting disease, and tuberculosis. In addition, the proximity to an international border with robust import/export activity necessitates rapid, accurate diagnosis of disease in food animals. Failure to do so creates an increased risk to livestock health, food safety, and human health, and could have serious consequences in statewide, national, and international animal health and biosecurity.

One of the key factors in the generation of high quality, timely diagnostic reports is retention of veterinary diagnosticians. This plays a vital role in facilitating case turn-around time, the availability of a wide range of diagnostic modalities, participation in national surveillance programs such as NAHLN, and provision of much needed time for consultation with production animal veterinarians and personal study to improve the level of service provided.

Two of the three pathologists at the laboratory are in the later phases of their careers, and although a previously open position for a third pathologist was recently filled, the financial burden of educational debt repayment, cost of living, and a lower than average salary make retention of this position extremely precarious. Considering potential impending retirements, retention of this third position is extremely

important for the maintenance of laboratory services and even national accreditation (2). Loan repayment assistance would make it easier to attract and retain younger pathologists and provide for continued service to the food animal industry.

References:

- (1) 2011 MT Dept. of Agriculture statistics ([www.agr.mt.gov](http://www.agr.mt.gov))
- (2) AAVLD Accreditation Reviews: 1998, 2003, 2007
- (3) ACVP: 2006 Salary Survey and 2007 Employer Demographics Survey (<http://www.acvp.org/Media/supply.cfm>)
- (4) U.S. Census Bureau
- (5) ACCRA Cost of Living Index

(Optional) If the nominator wishes to specify a service time for this shortage situation that is higher than the minimum required for the shortage type checked on Page 1, please specify the percent time in the box below (based on a 40-hour work week). Leave the box blank if the service time for this shortage situation is for the minimum percent time of the shortage type indicated.

49%

**Minimum Service time required for each shortage type**

Type I: 80 percent time or 32 hours/week

Type II: 30 percent time or 12 hours/week

Type III: 49 percent time or 19.6 hours/week

SAHO nominator must check both boxes below in order for NIFA to consider this nomination for official designation

- By checking this box, I affirm that this form represents a nomination and is subject to NIFA review and approval.
  
- By checking this box, I affirm that it is my professional opinion that this is a bona fide food supply or public health-related veterinary shortage situation. I affirm due diligence has been invested to identify this area as a shortage situation of at least moderate priority (severity).

Authorized State or Insular Area Animal Health Official or designee:

Name: Marty Zaluski, DVM

Title: Montana State Veterinarian

Organization: Montana Department of Livestock

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Public reporting for OMB control number 0524-0046 is estimated to average two hours, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information, unless it displays a current valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to NIFA, OIGFM, 800 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW, Washington, DC 20024, Attention Policy Section. Do not return the completed form to this address.

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