

# 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 (SAHO) section of the VMLRP web site ([www.nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp](http://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: Delaware  
(e.g., County, State/Insular Area; must be a logistically feasible veterinary practice service area)

Approximate Center of Shortage Area  
 (or Location of Position if Type III): 2320 S. DuPont Hwy., Dover, DE 19901  
(e.g., Address or Cross Street, Town/City, and Zip Code)

**Overall Priority of Shortage:** Critical Priority

**Type of Veterinary Practice Area/Discipline/Specialty (select one) :**

Type III: Public Practice (awardee obligation at least 49% FTE or 19 hr/week)

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**For Type I or II Private Practice:**

<p><b>Must cover</b>(check at least one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Beef Cattle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Cattle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Swine</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poultry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Small Ruminant</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	<p><b>May cover</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Beef Cattle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Cattle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Swine</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poultry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Small Ruminant</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>
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**For Type III Public Practice:**

Employer: Delaware Department of Agriculture      Position Title: Assistant State Veterinarian

Please select **one or more** specialty/disciplinary areas:

Food Safety

Public Health

Epidemiology

Other: Animal welfare

(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 above, 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.

 %

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 1500 characters).

The State of Delaware (DE) has a severe shortage of veterinarians in public practice. There is no Public Health Veterinarian or Wildlife Veterinarian employed by the State of Delaware. Aside from the State Animal Health Official (SAHO), there is one other regulatory (State) veterinarian who holds responsibility for ensuring the health of domestic species: the Assistant State Veterinarian (Asst. SAHO). Because there are <2 full time food animal veterinarians who practice in DE, the SAHOs are often called upon to respond to outbreaks of disease in food animals or to perform necropsies to rule out foreign animal disease or zoonotic disease. The Asst. SAHO plays a critical role in protecting DE's animal health by acting as a field veterinarian as well as regulating contagious diseases and ensuring animal welfare. The Asst SAHO serves as a public health vet and wildlife vet when needed.

The objectives of a veterinarian meeting this shortage situation are to 1) develop, implement, and manage statewide animal and poultry health programs; 2) serve as the SAHO in his/her absence; 3) perform diagnostic work and apply epidemiological principles to reports of disease from the field so that appropriate control measures can be taken; 4) work closely with the Division of Public Health on zoonotic disease investigations; and 5) provide oversight & development of policy for reports of animal neglect or other animal welfare issues that pertain to agricultural species.

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 1500 characters or less).

- 1) HEALTH AND WELFARE: Duties of the Assistant State Veterinarian/Asst. SAHO are within the Department of Agriculture (DDA). All activities relate to the mission statement of the Poultry and Animal Health section within DDA: to protect livestock and poultry from the spread of contagious diseases. In addition to protecting animal health, the Asst. SAHO oversees all reports of animal neglect or cruelty related to agricultural species. With the decrease in the number of Delaware citizens who are involved in agriculture, it is becoming more common that veterinarians are called upon to answer questions about how livestock and poultry are raised.
- 2) DISEASE CONTROL AND FIELD INVESTIGATION: The Asst. SAHO assists the SAHO in his/her responsibility for controlling the spread of infectious diseases throughout the State by performing field investigations where veterinary input is required to rule out foreign animal diseases or to take regulatory action.
- 3) COORDINATE WITH SISTER AGENCIES: The Asst. SAHO works closely with the Division of Public Health on zoonotic and vectorborne diseases. This position works with the Department of Natural Resources on fish and wildlife disease surveillance and management, and cooperates in the regulation of captive cervids and exotic animals. The Asst. SAHO works with emergency managers and other first responders towards the development of emergency plans for responding to foreign animal diseases.

Please describe any past efforts to recruit and retain a veterinarian in the shortage situation identified above (limit your response to 750 characters or less).

Recruitment efforts for veterinarians have resulted in small applicant pools. The veterinarians who accepted regulatory positions were unlikely to be retained mainly due to the relatively low salary in comparison to those salaries offered by industry or in private practice. Between 2004 and 2015, five veterinarians voluntarily left the Delaware Department of Agriculture for reasons other than retirement. It is speculated that the low, relatively fixed compensation in the face of increased cost of living and poor economy led to these vets leaving state employment.

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 2000 characters or less).

The shortage in public service veterinarians in DE creates a weak link between agriculture and public health, wildlife biologists, emergency managers, and neighboring SAHOs. The numerous livestock and poultry health regulatory programs for which a SAHO has responsibility cannot be properly handled by a single administrator (SAHO). In the absence of an Asst. SAHO, the authority for protecting animal health and welfare falls to non-veterinary personnel within DDA when the SAHO is out of the office on business, due to illness, or on vacation. The field and regulatory response to disease reports and welfare investigations is extremely time consuming for one SAHO, which means that responding to complaints or concerns about animal health are often handled by non-veterinary inspectors. Additionally, there is a serious risk that a public health issue could go unnoticed or under-served in an agricultural setting if an Asst. SAHO is not employed to focus on such reports.

Currently we operate in a reactive manner with our partners in public health and the fish and wildlife agencies. This relationship could be greatly improved if someone like the Asst. SAHO could set up proactive One Health and agriculture-wildlife meetings on a quarterly basis. Having just one SAHO in Delaware means there simply isn't enough time to organize said meetings to discuss ways we could assist each other by sharing data and collaborating on disease issues.

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: Heather Hirst, DVM MS

Title: State Veterinarian

Organization: Delaware Department of Agriculture

Email: heather.hirst@state.de.us

Telephone Number: (302) 698-4560  
(Area code required)

Public reporting for OMB control number 0524-0050 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, OGF, 800 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW, Washington, DC 20024, Attention Policy Section. Do not return the completed form to this address.