

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) for the number of nominations permitted for your state or insular area.

Location of Veterinary Shortage Area for this Nomination

Location of Veterinary Shortage: Webb, Zapata and Starr, TX
(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): Intersection of Hwy 83 and TX 16, Zapata, Texas
(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 II: Private Practice - Rural Area, Food Animal Medicine (awardee obligation: at least 30% FTE or 12hr/week)

For Type I or II Private Practice:

Must cover(check at least one)

- Beef Cattle
- Dairy Cattle
- Swine
- Poultry
- Small Ruminant
- Other: Equine-ranch horses and racing equine

May cover

- Beef Cattle
- Dairy Cattle
- Swine
- Poultry
- Small Ruminant
- Other: _____

For Type III Public Practice:

Employer: _____ Position Title: _____

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

- Food Safety
- Public Health
- Epidemiology
- Other: _____

(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).

There is a dire need for a veterinarian to serve the food animal and working equine population in this three-county area near the Mexican border. The area has rather large beef cattle population, as well as working ranch horses, pleasure horses and racehorses. There is a weekly livestock auction in Rio Grande City and two large feedlots in the area. This is an area of great concern for the entire state and nation due to proximity to the Mexican border and Mexican Cattle Fever. According to the current Texas Almanac, ranching & agribusiness are in the top 5 economic sectors in the area, and cattle are a significant contributor to the overall market value of agriculture of \$64.4 million in Starr County and \$13.1 million in Zapata County. A veterinarian serving this area would be a mixed rural practitioner, able to competently handle all species presented. Starr and Zapata Counties have been designated as shortage areas in previous years with no successful award recipients. Due to ongoing and expanding need in these and other neighboring South Texas counties, Webb County is being added to the area designation in hopes of increasing the chance of successfully recruiting additional veterinary care.

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).

Daily activities would include tending to both the individual health concerns of beef cattle such as emergencies, reproductive work, injuries and general illness, as well as serving as a trusted resource to the ranching community on herd health, best management practices and animal care and welfare. Many lay people in this community are well-versed in performing many of their own common procedures on cattle. A veterinarian would need to gain the trust of these ranchers and work within their existing knowledge base to help improve management practices, be available for emergencies, and be the first line of defense against infectious disease. The two primary roles of a veterinarian in this area would be, 1) to provide veterinary care to food animals (predominantly beef cattle) which are now mostly tended by lay people/ranchers themselves due to lack of veterinary access, and 2) to provide veterinary care to the area's working horses, some of which are currently hauled as far as McAllen (~100 miles) for basic services such as vaccines and blood collection. Specific activities would include pregnancy determination, regulatory work including brucellosis testing and vaccination, EIA testing, health certificates, working a local sale barn, and more.

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).

One practitioner in Zapata tried to recruit an associate or sell his practice for 5 years prior to his retirement. Another practitioner in Rio Grande City services the Zapata area once a month but has scaled back his practice due to health. He has plans to retire and hopes to recruit an associate who will give the community for which he cares deeply, the conscientious and personal care they deserve. Despite activities such as advertisement and working with the local community and Texas A&M, it has been difficult to recruit and retain a veterinarian in this area.

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).

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there are approximately 136,000 head of cattle and calves in these three counties. The majority of food animals are beef cattle and there are also estimated to be 2,000-4,000 horses in Starr and Zapata counties. One area rancher reports that without veterinary care for cattle, they "practice what they know and if it doesn't work, then there's only one option left." In addition to the risks to individual animal health if a veterinarian is not secured in this area, herd health will suffer in the long run. There is a huge risk of foreign or emerging animal diseases entering the area and going undiagnosed until they have already become too widespread to contain. An outbreak of something like foot and mouth disease in this area could have devastating consequences to the national food supply, economy and international trade. Slow response time due to lack of veterinary attention could be disastrous. In addition, the spread of fever ticks into US territory is a constant threat to US cattle and has been since the 1800's. Starr County includes the last remaining temporary quarantine zone for cattle fever ticks in Texas, and was also the last county to have cattle diagnosed with *Brucella abortus* in the state, in February 2011. A disease incursion from across the border with Mexico could cause economic damage to industries nationwide and affect international trade for the whole country. A local accredited veterinarian is our first line of defense.

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: Andy Schwartz, DVM (point of contact Susan Culp, DVM)

Title: Interim Executive Director

Organization: Texas Animal Health Commission

Email: comments@tahc.texas.gov (susan.culp@tahc.texas.gov)

Telephone Number: 800-550-8242 x716
(Area code required)

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, OGF, 800 9th St. SW, Washington, DC 20024, Attention Policy Section. Do not return the completed form to this address.