

Deadline Approaches for Public Comment on Proposed Rule Change to Practice Act

The Illinois Department of Professional Regulation (DPR) has recently published a proposed rule change in the Illinois Register (dated 12/19/03) to amend the veterinary practice act to recognize the Program for Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE) for graduates of non-accredited schools/colleges of veterinary medicine. Please see:

http://ilsos.net/departments/index/register/register_volume27_issue51.pdf

Review pg. 18955 for the full text of the proposed rule change. The public has 45 days from the date of publication (i.e. until 2/4/04) to comment. The proposed rule change is also posted on the DPR Web site:

<http://www.ildpr.com/WHO/ARprospd/WEBpropVet.pdf>

Washington Cow with BSE Likely to Be Only Infected Animal in Herd: DeHaven (courtesy AVMA)

Since bovine spongiform encephalopathy was diagnosed in Washington state in December, the Department of Agriculture has been "operating out of an abundance of caution" with regard to public and animal safety, said Dr. Ron DeHaven, the USDA's chief veterinary officer. On Jan. 11, Dr. DeHaven spoke at the AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference in Chicago about the ongoing epidemiologic investigation occurring on both sides of the U.S.- Canadian border.

"We know that even in countries with a high prevalence of the disease, most notably the United Kingdom, it is very rare for there to be more than one or two, or maybe three positive animals in a given herd,"

Dr. DeHaven said. "It's very likely that this (Washington state cow) was the only animal in that herd that was infected." Nonetheless, since the Holstein tested positive for BSE on Dec. 23, the USDA has traced, quarantined, and culled hundreds of at-risk cattle, recalled thousands of pounds of beef, and implemented several measures to ensure the safety of the food supply.

Dr. DeHaven believes one of the more important safeguards announced by Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman is a national animal identification system. Because BSE is not a contagious disease, agriculture officials have had weeks to track down animals of concern. "But if we were dealing with a highly infectious disease, such as foot-and-mouth disease," he said, "we would need to be able to trace animals in a matter of hours if we had any hope of containing and eradicating this disease." Such an identification system has been in the works for more than two years. Dr. DeHaven hopes that resources will now be made available to accelerate the system's implementation.

The investigation has traced the infected cow to her birth herd on a dairy farm in Alberta, Canada, meaning there has not been a native-born case of BSE in the United States. Consumer confidence in the safety of U.S. beef remains high, and cattle prices appear to be rebounding. Dr. DeHaven referred to a study by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis that concluded that if BSE is in the United States, then it exists at low prevalence. Moreover, the ban on ruminant-to-ruminant feed would eliminate the disease, even if the compliance rate were only 70 percent. The Food and Drug Administration claims a better than 99 percent compliance rate, Dr. DeHaven noted.

Many have tried comparing the BSE situation in North America with those in some European Union nations and Japan. "In fact, the situations are very much different," Dr. DeHaven said. There has been a high prevalence of the disease in some E.U. countries. Yet, extensive surveillance programs in Canada and the United States demonstrated a low prevalence of the disease here. Consumer confidence in the E.U. nations and Japan is so low that governments have gone to such extremes as testing animals that aren't of the susceptible population, such as cows younger than 30 months of age.

The United States is being pressured to follow those models, despite what is scientifically known about BSE, Dr. DeHaven noted. Trade has suffered a massive blow. In 2002, America exported \$3.1 billion in beef and beef products. "Indeed, virtually all of that export market has now been shut off," he said, adding that Congress is likely to introduce any number of bills pertaining to the disease and its effects on trade.

Bills Call For Ban On Slaughter Of Horses

Equine lovers and state legislators clashed this week over a proposed ban on the slaughter of horses for food. Cavel International, a Belgian-owned horse slaughtering plant in DeKalb, has been closed since it was destroyed by fire in March 2002. The facility is scheduled to reopen in March, according to a plant secretary. However, two bills – one from each legislative chamber – may stop it.

Senate Bill 1921 and House Bill 3845 each call for a ban on the slaughter of horses for human consumption. Representative Robert Molaro, D-Chicago, sponsored the House bill and expects final action in February.

Cavel is one of only three horse slaughterhouses in the country; the other two are in Texas. All horsemeat produced at the Illinois plant is shipped overseas.

The Senate passed the bill last March, but Molaro held it for a final vote in the House in December out of respect for the late Representative David Wirsing, who represented the DeKalb area and died days before the planned vote. He opposed the ban.

Representative Robert Pritchard, R-Sycamore, took Wirsing's seat and also opposes the ban. "If we as a government start banning one segment of the livestock industry, then it's a slippery slope for the rest of the livestock industry," Pritchard said. "It's horses today but probably cows and pigs tomorrow."

Horses are classified as livestock under some provisions of state law and as companions under others, according to Jim Fraley, livestock program director of the Illinois Farm Bureau. The bureau opposed the ban last year and will continue to do so, Fraley said. Slaughter is "an opportunity to permit a humane and swift end to life instead of prolonged suffering," he said. The bureau believes that more horses will be neglected at the end of their lives if the ban is passed. Owners will have nothing else to do with them.

Animal activists, on the other hand, held a Capitol news conference in support of the bills. They charge that Cavel treats horses cruelly and has a negligible impact on the economy.

ISVMA Annual Convention Deadline Looms

The early registration deadline of January 20th is fast approaching. Hotel reservations should be made at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest (888) 627-8093. Ask for the ISVMA discount so your room applies to our contract requirement!

You can register on-line at www.isvma.org and we will invoice you for payment of your registration fees.