

Submitter: Kate Lott
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1539
Topic:

I am a cattle veterinarian from Tillamook, and I have practiced for over twenty years in rural areas in three states. I am opposed to SB 1539 because of the significant implications it poses for both animal and human health in Oregon. Licensed veterinarians undergo extensive education and training to diagnose pregnancy, reproductive and infectious diseases, and to prescribe appropriate treatments when needed. We are also trained in biosecurity and in recognizing zoonotic diseases that can affect human health. These responsibilities fall squarely within the practice of veterinary medicine, which is regulated by the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board through required testing, licensing, and continuing education.

Transrectal palpation carries risks when performed incorrectly. Allowing untrained lay individuals to perform and charge for this procedure without adequate training, oversight, or liability coverage removes critical safeguards for animals, farmers, and consumers. Additionally, asking ODA or OVMEB to develop training, testing, and licensing systems for non veterinarians is unrealistic given current resource limitations.

Reproductive and routine veterinary services are foundational for building and sustaining large animal veterinary practices. I recognize the real challenges created by the shortage of rural large animal veterinarians, and I support efforts to strengthen access to medical professionals—including veterinarians, physicians, dentists, and others—in rural communities. These shortages are complex, but they are often tied to professionals' ability to build sustainable clientele and livelihoods. SB 1539, however, moves in the opposite direction by allowing individuals with minimal training and oversight to perform specialized procedures at lower cost and greater convenience. This undermines the value and expertise of veterinarians and contributes to the ongoing shortage.

In Oregon, producers already have legal options when veterinary access is difficult: they may palpate their own cattle or use non invasive blood or milk tests to determine pregnancy. If the goal of SB 1539 is to support producers facing barriers related to cost or geographic access, those tools already exist.

Untrained individuals should not be relied upon to fill gaps in essential animal health services—services that directly impact our food supply and public health. Just as I would not want an unlicensed person performing dermatology procedures because the nearest specialist is two hours away, we should not compromise on the level of care provided to the animals in our care or for our food supply.

There are real challenges on all sides of this issue, but SB 1539 does not offer a responsible or effective solution to those challenges. Please oppose SB 1539.