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On Behalf Of: Food Safety and Humane Treatment of Animals
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1539
Topic:

Opposition Testimony to Oregon SB 1539

SB 1539 creates a dangerous and indefensible contradiction in Oregon law. It authorizes unlicensed individuals to perform invasive rectal pregnancy examinations on cattle while prohibiting them from prescribing medications, administering emergency treatments, or making euthanasia decisions when predictable complications arise. Pregnancy verification routinely reveals serious concurrent conditions—uterine infections, twins with freemartin risk, abortions, or early indicators of dystocia—that demand immediate veterinary intervention. Authorizing the procedure while barring the ability to treat foreseeable emergencies is not expanded access to care; it is reckless endangerment of animal welfare.

Diagnostic accuracy is also fundamentally compromised. Accurate pregnancy staging, assessment of fetal viability, and identification of reproductive pathology require years of supervised veterinary training. Errors in diagnosis lead to inappropriate culling decisions, delayed rebreeding, avoidable financial losses, and long-term economic harm to livestock producers. These outcomes undermine both animal welfare and agricultural viability.

SB 1539 further weakens biosecurity and public health protections. Rectal examinations create direct exposure to zoonotic and reportable diseases including brucellosis, Johne's disease, leptospirosis, and bovine viral diarrhea. Licensed veterinarians are trained in biosecurity protocols, are mandatory disease reporters, and are legally accountable under state and federal law. Unlicensed individuals operate outside this framework, increasing the risk of disease transmission across herds, to humans, and into Oregon's food supply—jeopardizing consumer confidence and export markets.

Pregnancy verification is not an isolated task; it is a core component of comprehensive herd health conducted within a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR). That relationship ensures continuity of care, disease surveillance, medical recordkeeping, and professional accountability. SB 1539 fragments this system by carving out a central veterinary service from the VCPR, weakening oversight and standards statewide.

Oregon's rural large-animal veterinary shortage is real and serious. However, SB 1539 is not a solution. It devalues veterinary expertise, risks discouraging new

graduates from rural practice, and substitutes unlicensed labor for professional care. Proven, responsible alternatives exist: expanding loan repayment and scholarship programs, supporting rural internships and mentorships, investing in mobile and tele-veterinary services, and strengthening rural veterinary infrastructure.

Governor Kotek vetoed a nearly identical bill, SB 976, in 2025, citing these same concerns—reduced disease detection and reporting, and inadequate oversight of unlicensed providers offering professional services. SB 1539 fails to address those veto rationales.

This bill lowers established standards of care, shifts unacceptable risk onto animals and producers, and authorizes foreseeable harm without meaningful safeguards. I respectfully urge the Legislature to reject SB 1539 and instead pursue veterinarian-led policies that genuinely strengthen rural access, animal welfare, food safety, and Oregon agriculture.