



February 3, 2026

Testimony Submitted to the Senate Committee Natural Resources and Wildfire

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Diana Wirth, President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, and I am here on behalf of our members in support of Senate Bill 1539.

A profitable and well managed cattle operation depends on consistent pregnancy checking. It is one of the most effective tools producers have to monitor herd health, plan for calving, and make decisions that protect both animal welfare and economic stability.

Pregnancy checks provide two essential benefits. They allow ranchers to accurately plan for the calving season, and they identify open cows so producers can reduce feed costs and adjust breeding strategies. They are also the first line of defense against trichomoniasis, a reproductive disease that causes infertility and early embryonic loss. Trich is difficult to detect without routine herd checks. Infected animals often appear healthy, and the earliest warning signs—too many open cows, a drawn out calving season, or conception rates dropping from 94 percent to the mid 80's as an example—are all indicators of this disease. **Timely** pregnancy checking is vital. **When veterinary services can't be scheduled, or appointments are scheduled months out, the window of opportunity to identify these types of issues rapidly declines. This is neither the veterinarian's fault, nor is it the rancher's fault. It's simply the situation we find ourselves in.**

According to the USDA website, Baker County alone covers more than 3,000 square miles and supports roughly 76,000 cows and calves, yet the number of large animal veterinarians has fallen sharply. In 2005, Baker and Union Counties had about 16 large animal vets; today, only six remain. USDA's Veterinary Services Shortage map also shows multiple Oregon counties (Jackson, Douglas in High Priority shortage status, with Wallowa, Baker, and Union listed as Critical Priority. In addition, it identifies the average age of veterinarians in the area as 60 years of age.

Given these realities, trained technicians can help fill essential gaps. Senate Bill 1539 preserves flexibility by allowing pregnancy checking through palpation, ultrasound, blood testing, and future technologies. This bill does not threaten veterinarians; it might even create a pathway into the profession. With veterinary school costs often exceeding \$200,000, hands-on experience and income opportunities could potentially help encourage the next generation of rural large animal practitioners.

In regions where livestock numbers are rising, veterinary capacity is declining, and diseases like trich pose real economic risks, this bill offers a practical and responsible solution. With the proper rules and safeguards in place, it will ensure the program is implemented appropriately.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association respectfully urges your support for Senate Bill 1539. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diana Wirth, Oregon Cattlemen's Association President