



Oregon Cattlemen's Association
1320 Capitol Street NE, Suite 150
Salem, OR 97301
Phone – (503) 361-8941
Fax – (503) 361-8947
www.orcattle.com

Tammy L. Dennee, CMP, CAE - Executive Director
Mobile – (541) 980-6887

February 23, 2026

Testimony submitted to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

SUBJECT – SB 1539

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice Chair McDonald and members of the committee, my name is Diana Wirth, and I serve as President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. My written testimony is submitted on behalf of our members and ranch families across Oregon in support of Senate Bill 1539.

For every cattle operation, large or small, pregnancy checking is one of the most important tools we have. It helps us plan for calving, manage feed costs, and protect both animal welfare and the financial stability of our ranches. It is also our first line of defense against trichomoniasis, a reproductive disease that can quietly devastate a herd. The earliest signs—too many open cows, a stretched-out calving season, and conception rates dropping from the mid-90s into the 80s—are easy to miss without timely checks.

But in many parts of rural Oregon, timely checks simply aren't possible. Appointments are booked months out, and it's no one's fault—not the veterinarians', and not ranchers. It's the reality we're all living with.

To put it in perspective, Baker County covers more than 3,000 square miles and supports roughly 76,000 cows and calves. Yet the number of large-animal veterinarians in Baker and Union Counties has dropped from about 16 in 2005 to just six today. USDA's veterinarian shortage map shows several Oregon counties in High or Critical Priority status, and the average age of the veterinarians who remain is around 60. These are dedicated professionals, but there simply aren't enough of them.

Senate Bill 1539 gives us a practical way to fill those gaps. It allows trained technicians to perform pregnancy checks using palpation, ultrasound, blood testing, and future technologies—all within a framework that maintains safeguards and accountability. This bill doesn't threaten veterinarians. If anything, it may help strengthen the pipeline by giving young people hands-on experience and income opportunities before taking on the cost of veterinary school.

In areas where livestock numbers are rising, veterinary capacity is shrinking, and diseases like trich pose real economic risks, SB 1539 is a responsible, commonsense solution. With a sunset amendment for 2031, we will have time to determine whether the program works for rural Oregon ranch families and veterinarians. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association also appreciates the opportunity to work collaboratively with OVMEB as a stakeholder in the rule-writing process.

On behalf of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, I respectfully urge your support of SB 1539.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Diana Wirth, President

