

HCS HB 693 -- LARGE ANIMAL VETERINARY STUDENT LOAN ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Quinn (7)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 9 to 0.

This substitute transfers the administration of the Large Animal Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program from the Missouri Veterinary Medical Board to the Department of Agriculture. The maximum number of veterinarians to whom loan repayments can be granted each year is increased from five to six, the required number of years of service in an area of defined need to satisfy the loan repayment requirement is reduced from five to four, and the maximum service loan repayment amount per year is increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

The Large Animal Veterinary Student Loan Program is established to provide up to six loans yearly to veterinary students attending the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri-Columbia. No student can receive more than \$80,000 in loans. Veterinary students agreeing to locate their practice in department-identified, under-served areas of the state will have certain amounts of their loan principal and interest forgiven.

The department director will appoint an advisory panel to make recommendations regarding the administration of the programs. The panel will consist of three licensed veterinarians, the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, and a public member representing agricultural interests.

The Large Animal Veterinary Student Loan Payment Fund is created consisting of appropriations from general revenue and donations. Moneys in the fund will be used for student loans and administrative expenses incurred by the department.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that Missouri is losing large animal veterinarians to retirement while lucrative small animal practice, industry quality control and research positions, and government food inspection are drawing new veterinarians away from rural large animal practices. Veterinarians are responsible for the detection and containment of disease in Missouri's livestock industry which is vital in the protection of the health of Missouri's people and its economy. The loan repayment program benefits all Missourians by providing an incentive for new veterinarians to specialize in large animal practice in under-served rural areas of the state.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Quinn (7); Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Missouri Veterinary Medical Association; Department of Agriculture; Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce; Robert Hertzog, DVM; Missouri Farm Bureau; University of Missouri-Columbia College of Veterinary Medicine; and Missouri Agriculture Industries Council.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.