



BC Veterinarians Need Your Help

Right now, the shortage of veterinarians in BC -- the worst in Canada -- is responsible for animals suffering and dying. Public health is at risk, animal rescue groups are limited in which animals they can rescue, equine owners have euthanized their horses for preventable maladies, companion animal owners face delays that contribute to their animals suffering and dying, and puppy and kitten owners face lengthy waits for preventative and urgent veterinary care.

The fastest and most effective way to start to address this shortage of BC veterinarians is to train more BC students to become veterinarians. Each year there are around 140 qualified BC applicants but there is only space for 20 to be admitted. The Chapter has asked the Minister of Advanced Education Anne Kang to fund an additional 20 seats (for a total of 40) to begin to address the horrors caused by this shortage of veterinarians. The Ministry has said funding to train veterinarians is not a priority.

The Society of BC Veterinarians Chapter desperately needs your help. If you believe that veterinary medicine is important to the health and welfare of animals, and that this dire shortage is affecting the welfare of animals, please write to your MLA asking them to fund more BC students at veterinary university and copy the email to anne.kang.mla@leg.bc.ca

At the request of the Ministry, the Chapter completed a labour market study demonstrating that BC was short 100 veterinarians per year for each of the subsequent five years, culminating in a shortage of 500 veterinarians by 2024.

Daily, our veterinarians hear about situations where animals are dying and suffering as a result of an inability to obtain a timely appointment with their veterinarians, specifically due to a desperate shortage of veterinarians. Urban veterinarians are reporting two weeks or longer wait times to get appointments for veterinary care. Rural veterinarians report eight weeks or longer and, in some cases, the animals die before getting the help they need. Mobile veterinarians are in short supply and these veterinarians are the ones typically providing end-of-life care for animals belonging, in many cases, to the elderly or infirm who cannot pick up a large immobile animal and take it to a veterinary clinic, if an appointment was available. These animals, then, die painfully in front of their owners. Equine veterinarians are telling us that horses have died because a veterinarian was not available despite the horse having a treatable condition. In some cases, euthanasia is performed solely due to lack of an available veterinarian. We heard of one instance of a horse dying in a BC Ferries parking lot on its way to see a veterinarian who could not take the time to travel as it would leave other horses without veterinary care. Large and small animal rescue and welfare groups are calling us to ask what they can do to force the government to step in and help. Rescue animals cannot be rescued if there are no veterinarians to provide veterinary care.

COVID only made matters worse: veterinarians were declared essential services and now work excessive hours caused by an increase in pet acquisition and increased time per appointment due to COVID protocols and increased delays between appointments due to cleaning procedures.

BC veterinarians need your help. Please contact your MLA today and tell them you want BC to fund an additional 20 BC students at veterinary university.