



# UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2016 Resolution

120th Annual Meeting

October 13-19, 2016 ~ Greensboro, NC

---

**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 36**

**APPROVED**

**SOURCE: USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY AND VETERINARY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**SUBJECT MATTER: Veterinary Public Practice Awareness and Promotion**

---

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

There have been several workforce studies over the last few years addressing the future of veterinary medicine and the critical role the profession plays in meeting societal needs, and the additional challenges the profession faces such as increased student debt. Most citizens of the nation are not aware of all the significant contributions veterinarians make to public health. To meet the increasing costs of veterinary education and the decreasing federal and state funding to support that education, veterinary colleges are increasing tuition and increasing class sizes in an attempt to meet those financial challenges.

A National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report from 2013 entitled “Workforce Needs in Veterinary Medicine” states that most of those students will likely practice companion animal medicine, and that “these actions will increase the supply of companion animal practitioners, the largest group of veterinary practitioners, at a time of uncertain demand for companion animal services”. The report further states that “the veterinary profession should expand its capacity to address complex global problems, such as those associated with food security, by encouraging interactions between US veterinary graduates and other disciplines and cultures, particularly in the developing world, where the profession has the opportunity to leverage its expertise in One Health and lead advances in food animal husbandry welfare, water safety and security, and the health of wildlife and ecosystems”. However, society must be convinced that investment in veterinary medicine is imperative. The study states that “the public, policymakers, and even medical professionals are frequently unaware of how veterinary medicine fundamentally supports both animal and human health and well-being” and that “broadening the public’s understanding will require commitment by veterinary leadership, the academe, and practitioners to develop and promote the profession as one that offers diverse career paths with many different niches for veterinarians, ranging from traditional companion animal practice to public and private sector positions in biomedicine, animal research, wildlife, the environment, global food production, food safety and security, and public health”.

An American Academy of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) report of 2008 stated, “To safeguard the US economy, public health, and food supply, there must be recruitment and preparation of additional veterinarians into careers in public health, food systems, biomedical research, diagnostic laboratory investigation, pathology, epidemiology, ecosystem health, and food animal practice”. Conclusion 1 of the NAS report states in part “societal needs for veterinary expertise are substantial and growing, but the potential contributions of veterinary medicine are not realized because appropriate positions in relevant sectors are lacking.” Although there are many reasons why there has not been adequate public sector financial support of veterinary education

and opportunities, one clear reason is the lack of awareness of the public and decision-makers, and indeed many early career veterinary students, as to the value, skills, and broad interdisciplinary capabilities of veterinarians. To enhance the ability of the veterinary profession to better meet societal needs and to provide more opportunities for employment for veterinarians, it is critically important to increase public awareness of the skills, abilities, and broad-based training of veterinarians.

**RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association urges the American Veterinary Medical Association to lead a public relations campaign similar to the “Partners for Healthy Pets” campaign, with a goal to raise public awareness of the breadth of skills of veterinarians in diagnostic and regulatory medicine and the contribution of veterinary medicine to public, animal and environmental health. Such a campaign could be called “Partners for a Healthy Planet”, “Partners for a Healthy Society,” or some such similar title.