

February 19, 2025

SB 976 - Oppose

Honorable Senator Nash,

I have owned horses and cattle for decades and am also a veterinarian. I represent the position of the United Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals as well.

All animals feel pain. Laypersons have no legal access to pain medications for any procedures. All animals can have multiple disease processes simultaneous to a dental procedure or pregnancy check. Laypersons are untrained and unskilled in recognition, diagnostics, and treatment modalities for anomalies, ie: heat damage to teeth, fractured teeth, oral melanomas, carcinomas, tooth root infections, viral diseases, recognition of rabies, west nile virus, or other zoonotic diseases animals can carry, harbor, die from, or transmit to humans.

There are no nationwide accredited education standards for procedures contained in this bill, except as a veterinarian. Oversight in the veterinary profession occurs in every State after passing a national board exam. There is no layperson oversight, nothing for owners to rely on should a drastic situation occur, disease process missed, even if an animal is killed by a layperson, even with rules written in the future. Lack of laymen knowledge of alternate disease processes is immense.

Dental care requires knowledge of nerves, anatomy, and muscle groups that control mastication. Animals feel pain and require, do no harm, scheduled drug sedation to perform appropriate dental care. At times there is need for removal of teeth from dense bone, maxillo sinus or cleft palate repair, identification of cancerous growths, major surgery to correct lesions, weeks of follow-up care, identification of other fractured bones that control swallowing and multiple other oral disease processes that occur.

Laypersons do not have surgical training, knowledge of in-depth disease processes to provide required responsible care, histopathology, hematology, or other diagnostics, nor education for interpretation. This puts animals at high risk for loss due to potential incompetence of the layperson.

DEA scheduled pharmaceuticals, and other products which require prescription for inflammation and disease are not available, nor understood by a layperson for proper therapy. A layperson would need to illegally obtain and use DEA scheduled drugs to perform treatments at a basic level. Overdose may kill an animal, while underdose or mixing pharmaceuticals inappropriately may cause a fractious outburst of an animal putting the layperson and owner at risk of fatal harm.

Pregnancy check of cattle is not just that. It's an opportunity to perform State required herd testing, mandatory vaccinations and tagging, disease tracking, recording cattle herd health for State purposes to reduce diseased meat and products to market for human consumption and use, both on dairy and beef ranches. Other diseases are treated simultaneously, ie hoof rot, pink eye, calf scours, coccidiosis. For small time producers, this is extremely critical to keep human population safe.

Preg checks are a tactile skill acquired over time. Many ranchers and dairymen perform their own preg checks, however, there are concerns. It follows along with lack of knowledge of disease processes studied by veterinarians over years of formal instruction. Many diseases are easily missed and transferred between cattle and farms with improper sanitation. Removing veterinarians from this procedure, removes herd oversight of our national food chain.

Laypersons are not trained in these disease processes. They do not have access to diagnostics, diagnostic labs, treatment protocols including quarantine standards. Laypersons do not recognize diseases as a veterinarian will, or have access to pharmaceuticals for treatment, in some cases, up to euthanasia for the protection of our food chain.

A few reproductive diseases are listed in this article from Texas A & M: <https://beefskillathon.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2015/10/beef-reproductive-diseases-in-cattle.pdf>

While the thought to reduce cost for owners is in the right place, creating laymen access to equine, cattle, and our food chain will be catastrophic to owners, animal health, and human safety. This bill, SB 976, should NOT pass. A better plan would be to develop a rural practitioner bill that promotes rural veterinary practice in remote areas, subsidized by the State to create affordability for practitioners. Do not pass SB 976; it poses too much risk, up to contaminating our food chain and human fatality.

Sincerely,

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