

Dear California Legislator:

The undersigned organizations urge the California Legislature to adopt legislation protecting the rights of animal owners to seek advice and assistance from individuals and professionals other than veterinarians. Our organizations represent pet owners, horse owners, farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, and related businesses.

The California Veterinary Medical Board (CVMB) has been imposing increasingly strict regulations on how they define veterinary medicine and who can work on animals. Several years ago, the Board made it illegal for acupuncturists, chiropractors and equine dentists to work on animals without direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. Those that continue to provide services face fines into thousands of dollars and legal action. Recently the CVMB proposed to do the same with animal massage and physical rehabilitation.

While CVMB claims that these new regulations are for animals' protection, there are better ways to address such concerns. The real impact of these regulations is to eliminate the perceived competition for veterinarians, harming both animal owners and their animals

It is not financially viable for all animal care to be provided by veterinarians. The fees are simply too high. Services such routine vaccinations, nutritional counseling, low-risk procedures such as castration or dehorning, and many others can be safely provided at much lower cost by other individuals.

Ranchers have hired out to non-veterinarians for basic husbandry services for generations. It is costly to have a licensed veterinarian come to the ranch or farm and difficult to haul large animals to a clinic, if there is even one close by.

In addition, while veterinarians are experts on some aspects of animal health, they are not experts in all aspects – either as a profession or individually. Animal owners regularly seek the advice and services of non-veterinarians, such as farriers, groomers, pet and feed stores, herbalists, animal caretakers and trainers, breeders, shelter and rescue staff as affordable and knowledgeable sources of animal health care. The emerging field of complementary and alternative medicine has increasingly gained popularity as animal owners see real improvements in their animals' health through these means. Veterinarians, while highly educated, generally have little training on topics such as *physical/massage therapy, use of natural medicines, and other aspects of care unless they seek training outside the veterinary school curriculum*

The California Veterinary Medical Board has already defined any advice and services regarding animal health “the practice of veterinary medicine”, which means they have the power to eliminate competition from other care professionals and experts.

We urge the California Legislature to adopt a bill for animal care that reflects the current California standards for human care set by SB 577 in 2002. The bill should allow non-veterinarians to provide their services to animal owners as long as they disclose their training and limitations, and have clients & customers sign a waiver. This would allow animal owners the choice of who to hire for their animals' care, based on the established concept of “informed consent.” Normal legal protections, such as lawsuits for negligence, would remain in place. A bill like this will ensure that animal owners will have access to affordable care for their animals.

Signed,