

Witness Testimony
House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
By: Kristin M. Haas, DVM
February 26, 2019
Vermont Food Animal Veterinarian Educational Loan Repayment Program

Program Synopsis

The authorizing statute for the Vermont Food Animal Veterinarian Educational Loan Repayment Program (VFAVELRP) was enacted in 2012. The VFAVELRP is intended to ensure an adequate and stable supply of food animal veterinarians in Vermont. Doing so helps protect animal health and public health and helps ensure a safe food supply. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets contracts with the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association to manage this program, and both entities are appreciative of the consistent support for this annual Next Generation funding appropriation. The Veterinary Loan Repayment Program is important to Vermont's veterinary professionals, and it is also important to Vermont livestock owners, industry members and Vermont consumers who take advantage of the bountiful supply of our locally grown animal-based food products. Please refer to the [program overview](#) for more details.

Applications for the VFAVELRP are accepted in the fall of each year. All applications are reviewed by the VFAVELRP Task Force, and decisions are made in November of each year. Successful applicants are notified in late November, and payments are made directly to the applicant's lender of choice in January of each year. Monetary awards are prioritized based on eligible applicants' ability to meet three criteria:

- Demonstrate a commitment to food animal private practice in support of the purpose of the VFAVELRP.
- Demonstration of commitment to the community and likelihood of staying in Vermont.
- Applicant's student loan debt level and number of years since graduation.

For more information, review the [VFAVELRP application](#).

2018 Award Information

Dr. Earl Brady – received \$16,605; employed by Cold Hollow Veterinary Services as an associate veterinarian; service area center is Newport, VT; works on all species of livestock; fills a geographic niche created by changes in a nearby veterinary practice.

Dr. Thomas Linden – received \$14,604; recent partner at Northwest Veterinary Associates located in St. Albans, VT; works on bovine species; provides services in Franklin, Hyde Park, Morrisville VT, as well as in New York. The VFAVELRP funding allowed Dr. Linden to begin buying into the practice in the summer of 2018, which is earlier than what would have otherwise been possible.

Prior-year Award Information

2012

Jen Hull with Northwest Vet Services – received \$13,000. Still practicing and is now a partner in the practice. NWV is a large multi-doctor practice that covers all of Franklin county and beyond.

Blake Nguyen – was with Northwest Veterinary Services at the time and received \$10,000, and now is on faculty at the Cornell College of Vet Medicine in the Dept. of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences – he is paying it forward by being a faculty member at a school that trains vet students from VT.

Allison Cornwall – was solo practice owner at the time and has since hired an associate veterinarian. Received \$5,000. Based in Middlesex but 2 doctor practice covers a larger geographic area. Dr. Cornwall is still practicing.

2013

Same 3 vets received monetary awards – the max allowed is three consecutive years of awards. Jen Hull received \$13,800, Blake Nguyen received \$6,900, Allison Cornwall received \$6,900

2014/2015

Allison Cornwall – received again for her third year - \$17,400

Jen Hull – received again for her third year - \$23,200

Megan Foy – was a new graduate at the time, and monetary award of \$23,300 contributed in part to her being able to join Wood Pond Vet Services full time in 2014 – practice is based in North Haverhill New Hampshire but ambulatory practice range includes northern and central Vermont

2016/2017

Dr. Elizabeth Brock with Northwest Veterinary Associates received \$13,500 in 2016 and \$10,000 in 2017. She is still practicing in VT.

Dr. Thomas Linden received \$13,500 in 2016 and \$15,000 in 2017. He is still practicing in VT

Additional Program Statistics

The \$30,000 appropriation has been utilized every year. Out of the seven veterinarians who have received awards, only one has left the state, which more than an 86% retention rate since program inception.

There has been a demand for this funding every year since program inception, and we expect that will continue given the viability of VT vet practices and the need for new associate veterinarians to come into the state and replace those retiring or otherwise exiting the profession.

Not only have the recipient veterinarians stayed in practice in the state, they have also become important in their respective communities and within the profession in general. Northwest Veterinary Associates was instrumental in helping us implement the Food Armor program and reduce the incidence of drug residues, and they routinely serve their clients and Franklin county farmers by hosting educational seminars on livestock husbandry, preventative medicine/herd health and nutrition. Dr. Jen Hull has testified in front of the legislature and is actively involved in the VVMA and served as the chair of the large animal educational committee. Allison Cornwall has held similar seminars for her clients and participates in other events pro bono to improve livestock husbandry. She is also generous with her time and has had students shadow her on the job to expose them to large animal practice, which helps orient the next generation of vets and hopefully increases their interest in returning to VT post-graduation.