

**February 15, 2024**

**State of Vermont- Senate Committee on Judiciary**

**Hearing:** “S. 58 – An act relating to increasing the penalties for subsequent offenses for trafficking and dispensing or sale of a regulated drug with death resulting”

**Testimony of:**

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Thank you, and good morning, Chair Sears, Vice Chair Hashim, and members of the Committee.

I am Dr. Lindsey Hornickel, Assistant Director in the Government Relations Division of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). On behalf of the 105,000 AVMA members, over 400 of whom live in Vermont, I appreciate the opportunity to emphasize the importance of preserving veterinary access to xylazine as Vermont considers legislation to address illicit xylazine.

The AVMA is deeply concerned about the emerging public health threat of illicit xylazine and the negative impact it is having throughout the country. It is critical that as policy is developed to address the illicit supply, that any new enforcement tools do not impede legal and responsible access of xylazine by veterinarians and our clients. The AVMA believes the amendment offered to Senate Bill 58 would preserve access to this critical drug for veterinarians and we strongly support its inclusion.

Xylazine is a prescription animal drug used to facilitate safe handling, as well as safe medical evaluation, treatment, and surgical care of many species. Ready access to this drug keeps

people safe and supports animal welfare when working with cattle, horses, zoo, wildlife, and laboratory species. In cattle, xylazine is the only safe and effective drug for sedation. In zoo and wildlife species, compounded xylazine is administered through darting systems to safely sedate patients remotely. Preserving the ability of veterinarians and their clients to sedate fractious and large animals is critical to keeping people and animals safe.

Preserving veterinary access also relies upon keeping the drug on the market and minimizing supply chain disruptions. There are only two manufacturers of xylazine for the U.S. market. One of these manufacturers does not currently make other controlled drugs and paused production in the second half of last year due to the lack of uniformity and clarity of rulemaking between states. This leaves only one manufacturer currently providing product to the entire US market.

Xylazine is a low-volume generic animal drug that generates little revenue for manufacturers. Therefore, adding regulatory burdens or facility investment requirements for the few remaining manufacturers increases the likelihood of supply disruption and could eliminate the drug from the market entirely. The amendment offered to Senate Bill 58 would permit the lawful manufacturing, distribution, and use of the FDA-approved and compounded xylazine for veterinarians. The amendment would not impose any additional regulatory burdens or requirements beyond what is already required under state and federal law as a prescription animal drug. Therefore, inclusion of this amendment would reduce the risk of supply disruptions of legitimate xylazine for Vermont veterinarians.

Since January of 2023, the AVMA has been engaged with policymakers on federal legislation and policy to preserve veterinary access while they work to address illicit xylazine. Currently, there are multiple versions of federal legislation moving through Congress to address this issue.

Although the final language is still being negotiated, all versions include bipartisan language intended to maintain legitimate xylazine in the market and preserve access and use of the drug by veterinarians and our clients.

The AVMA encourages the Committee to adopt the amendment offered to Senate Bill 58. This amendment is vital to safeguarding veterinary access for xylazine's legitimate uses and minimizes risk for supply chain disruptions by not imposing additional regulation on those handling the drug lawfully. The Committee's adoption of this amendment would help keep people safe when working with large and dangerous animals, as well as support animal welfare by facilitating access to care.

The AVMA appreciates the attention the Committee is giving to the needs of veterinary medicine while working to address a public health crisis. We will continue to support the work of the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association to ensure Vermont veterinarians and the animals under their care continue to have access to this important animal drug. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.