

Committee members,

Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Priebe. I am a licensed veterinary technician. I am also here as a representative of the ND Veterinary Technician Association. I graduated with a bachelor of science in Veterinary Technology in May, 1993. I was in practice until November, 2013, when our son was born. I hope to return to practice one day when he is older. During the 20.5 years that I was working, I worked in 2 very different veterinary practices. The first one was the Valley City Veterinary Hospital in Valley City, ND. I worked there for 16 years. The other practice was the Casselton Veterinary Service in Casselton, ND. I was there for 4.5 years.

These clinics use their veterinary technicians in similar but yet very different ways. The Valley City Veterinary Hospital employed (while I was there) 3 veterinarians, 1 veterinary technician, 1 veterinary assistant, and 1 receptionist. I did lab work, assisted in surgery, performed dentals, and whenever possible I assisted in large animal work. I spent the rest of my time restraining animals, client education, answering phone, helping out wherever needed, etc. At the Casselton Veterinary Service they employed 10 veterinarians, 20 veterinary technicians, 3 veterinary assistants, 6 receptionists, plus cleaning and maintenance people. The veterinary technicians at this practice were allowed to practice almost the fullest extent of our licenses. (See ND Veterinary Practice Act., pg 7, 43-29-12.1 Veterinary Technician Services-Emergency Services-Prohibited Services)

As Senator Lee requested, I am here to discuss veterinary technicians' ability to practice at the fullest of their ability and the potential for an expanded role for veterinary technicians-especially in the area of large food animal services. For clarification purposes; the definition of licensed veterinary technician means a person who has graduated from an accredited program in veterinary technology or an equivalent program as determined by the board, and who has passed an examination prescribed by the board. (ND Veterinary Practice Act, pg 1, 43-29-01.1 Definitions) For your information, there are a number of clinics in ND who do NOT employ licensed or graduate veterinary technicians. These clinics employ "on-the-job-trained" people and call them "veterinary technicians". These people are NOT veterinary technicians as they have not graduated from an accredited veterinary technology program.

At Casselton Veterinary Service the veterinary technicians were allowed to do everything on the duties list in the ND Veterinary Practice Act., pg 7, 43-29-12.1, Veterinary Technician Services-Emergency Services-Prohibited Services. There were times the veterinarian wanted to do certain duties themselves, such as catheterizing a urinary bladder. We were able to obtain history, temperature, pulse, and respiration on a patient before the veterinarian went in to see the patient. In many ways we ran similar to a human clinic. After the veterinarian checked the patient they would determine what

tests needed to be ran and would give the technician the “orders” and would then go on to the next patient. In the meantime, the technician would perform whatever the doctor requested and the veterinary assistants would help us. In the large food animal area, it was ran much the same as the small animal. We would obtain a history and get the animal into the clinic and secure by the time the veterinarian would come in.

In order for veterinary technicians to be used to the fullest of their abilities, the veterinarians need to allow us to do our jobs. The new veterinarians, that are just coming out of school, are used to veterinary technicians doing everything for them and they make the diagnosis and prescribe treatment. In many of the clinics in ND, this is not the case. There are a number of reasons for this ranging from not having enough technicians in a clinic to the policy of the clinic not allowing the technicians to do all the practice act allows.

In the ND Veterinary Practice Act under 43-29-12.1 Veterinary Technician Services-Emergency Services-Prohibited Services, it states that “1. A veterinary technician may perform the following services...”. It does NOT state that the technician is to be licensed or a graduate technician. This is how the “on-the-job-trained” persons are being called technicians. For this reason, it is difficult to discuss further expanded roles of a technician until the term veterinary technician is further defined.

In a previous meeting that this committee had in April, 2014, there was some discussion on allowing veterinary technicians to, for example, perform pregnancy testing of cows. Here is the problem, whether we are pregnancy checking a cow or looking at radiographs of dog or cat where obvious skeletons can be seen, veterinary technicians CANNOT diagnose. Pregnancy checking of any form is diagnosing, this is strictly prohibited by the Veterinary Practice Act. (ND Veterinary Practice Act., pg 7, 43-29-12.1 Veterinary Technician Services-Emergency Services-Prohibited Services). These prohibited services are not just a ND issue, these are criteria that come from the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association). There are 4 things that a veterinary technician is NOT allowed to do: 1. diagnose, 2. perform surgery, 3. prescribe medication, and 4. prognose. These are drilled into our heads while going to school. With that being said, there remains the question of how to provide better services to our clients when the veterinarian is out of the office on another call. Something that may be done on a clinic by clinic basis is to set up protocols for certain issues that may arise while the veterinarian is out. At the Valley City Veterinary Hospital, we had a protocol for scouring calves (calves with severe diarrhea). It was, if the veterinarian was out of the clinic, I as the technician could assess the calf, get a history from the owner, and get IV fluids started and when one of the veterinarians returned they would perform an exam and determine what the treatment plan was. In many cases, if that calf had to wait an hour for the veterinarian to return, it would probably be nearing death. The IV fluids would, at the very least, start to stabilize it until it could be seen by the veterinarian. We

had similar protocols at Casselton Veterinary Service as well. We could, in emergency situations, start treating an animal until a veterinarian could see it. For example, last summer a dog came in with heat stroke and the technicians brought it back to the treatment area and started to gradually cool it down and started an IV. As soon as a veterinarian was available they came and examined the dog and set up a treatment plan and spoke to the owners. While some technicians were working on the dog, another technician was obtaining a medical history from the owners. In both situations, the staff work as a team for the best result possible. Could protocols be set up in other situations? Yes, I believe so. It would need to be on clinic by clinic basis. The veterinarians need to have faith in and trust in their technicians in order for these protocols to work.

With the improvements in technology, (cell phones, smart phones, iPads, laptop computers, etc) there is always the possibility for more expanded roles for veterinary technicians. Part of the problem goes back to what I previously mentioned about “on-the-job-trained technicians”. From a legal standpoint, do you think it is wise to send someone out on a call for example or have them making decisions regarding emergency treatment of an animal if they have no formal training? I do not.

The National Association of Veterinary Technicians of America (NAVTA) has worked to develop some technician specialties. There are currently 11 VTS (Veterinary Technician Specialties). They are: The Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians, The Academy of Internal Medicine for Veterinary Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Behavior Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Zoological Medicine Technicians, The Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Surgical Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice, The Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians, The Academy of Veterinary Clinical Pathology Technicians. Of these 11 specialties two in particular deal with large animal and production animals and they are Academy of Internal Medicine for Veterinary Technicians and the Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice. In both these specialties the technician applying for them must specialize in a sub specialty which would be large animal and production animal. This would be a way to expand some services and do it legally. These technicians still cannot diagnose, perform surgery, prescribe medications, or prognose. They are able to do more advanced procedures than a technician straight out of school. A question you may be asking yourself is, why aren't there VTSs in ND? Simple, it is very difficult to obtain these specialties. They have certain requirements that you must complete before being allowed to sit for the specialty exam and then very strict requirements to maintain your specialty certification. To the best of my knowledge there is only one VTS in ND, her name is Tammy Treitline and she works for the Casselton Veterinary Service. Her specialty is in Equine Veterinary Nursing. In order for her to be allowed to sit for the exam it took her approximately 3 years of work to

fulfill all the requirements and she needed to work with an Equine Board Certified Veterinarian, which Casselton has. As she told me, without having Dr. Swor at that clinic she would never have been able to finish her specialty. As you can see it is not as easy as it would appear. In this age of lawsuits, I feel it is better to have properly trained personnel working on clients' animals.

I hope this answers your questions about veterinary technician duties. I have a copy of the ND Veterinary Practice Act attached to your copies of this information. Tammy Treitline also sent along the information regarding what she needed to complete in order to sit for the VTS test in Equine Nursing if you are interested in seeing it.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak regarding veterinary technician duties.

Lynn A. Priebe, LVT