

## WHAT PET OWNERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE NEW PROPOSED VETERINARY PROFESSION ACT (VPA) IN ALBERTA

Subsequent to the court case of the *Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) vs. Louis Pequin* where the AVMA sued the equine dentist (L. Pequin) for allegedly practicing veterinary medicine illegally and the AVMA lost the trial and any possible appeal, the AVMA has recently approached the Legislative Government of Alberta in order to redefine the meaning of “veterinary medicine” (see proposed amendments at <http://aoa.successnetwork.ca/Veterinary%20Profession%20Act.pdf>). The proposed changes to the VPA are very broad and are intended to be all encompassing. The *Alberta Veterinary Medical Association Members Magazine* (March/April, 2004 edition) presents an article entitled ‘Opening the Floodgates?’ where the AVMA states their intentions of restricting the delivery of health care services to animals strictly to registered veterinarians. A passage from this article states: “The AVMA will continue to work with government to halt the erosion of the profession due to legal technicalities and to restore to Albertans the protection inherent in having registered veterinarians legislated as the only persons qualified to deliver medical services to animals, including dentistry and other subspecialties.” The proposed amendment has the potential to directly or indirectly affecting all allied or alternative animal health care practitioners and a long list of other animal related businesses, organizations, and producers. The AVMA proposes that the meaning of “veterinary medicine” should encompass the entire “branch of knowledge that relates to maintaining the health of animals” as well as that which “relates to preventing, diagnosing, and treating diseases and injuries to animals”. This implies that a broad range of services and advice regarding animal health provided by persons other than registered veterinarians will not be available to the animal owning public.

If the proposed amendments to the *Veterinary Profession Act* are approved, it is possible that pet owners could lose their freedom of choosing alternative health care services and/or advice for their animals from persons other than registered veterinarians (such as chiropractors, physical therapists, massage, and holistic therapists, pet supply stores, breeders, etc). In addition, the proposed VPA definitions of what constitutes practicing veterinary medicine are unclear in their potential interpretations. Even though the VPA in *Section 2 (2)* (available for view at [http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/Acts/V02.cfm?frm\\_isbn=0779722922&type=htm](http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/Acts/V02.cfm?frm_isbn=0779722922&type=htm)) lists activities that can be carried out by people who are not licensed veterinarians and/or work under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, the list is too limited. If you have the freedom to seek and obtain health care choices and alternative for you and your family, why should you lose your rights to obtain the same type of care for your animals?

If you have concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the *Veterinary Profession Act*, you can write to your MLA **and** the Alberta Human Resources and Employment,

Professions and Occupations and Land Agent Licensing Manager, Adrian Pritchard **or** the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, Hon. Mike Cardinal and demand your right to obtain health care choices and alternatives for your animals. The addresses for the Government representatives are:

Hon. Mike Cardinal, Minister	Adrian Pritchard, Manager
Alberta Human Resources and Employment	Alberta Human Resources and Employment
#324 Legislative Bld.	Professions and Occupations and Land Agent Licensing
10800 – 97 <sup>th</sup> Ave	7 <sup>th</sup> Floor, 10808 – 99 Ave
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2B6	Edmonton, AB, T5K 0G5
Ph: (780) 415-4800	Ph: 310-0000
Fax: (780) 422-9556	

This information is brought to you on behalf of:

The Canadian Horse and Animal Physical Rehabilitation Association  
A Division of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association

**RELEVANT AND INFORMATIVE LINKS:**

A response to the proposed amendment on behalf of the Alberta Beef Producers

<http://www.albertabeef.org/pdf/veterinary%20profession%20review.pdf>

A discussion forum on the proposed amendment

<http://rodeoclassifieds.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=713>

The ruling of the AVMA vs Louis Pequin

<http://www.equinedental.com/106-cruling.htm>

The Court of Appeals decision

<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/jdb/2003-/ca/civil/2004/2004abca0089.pdf>