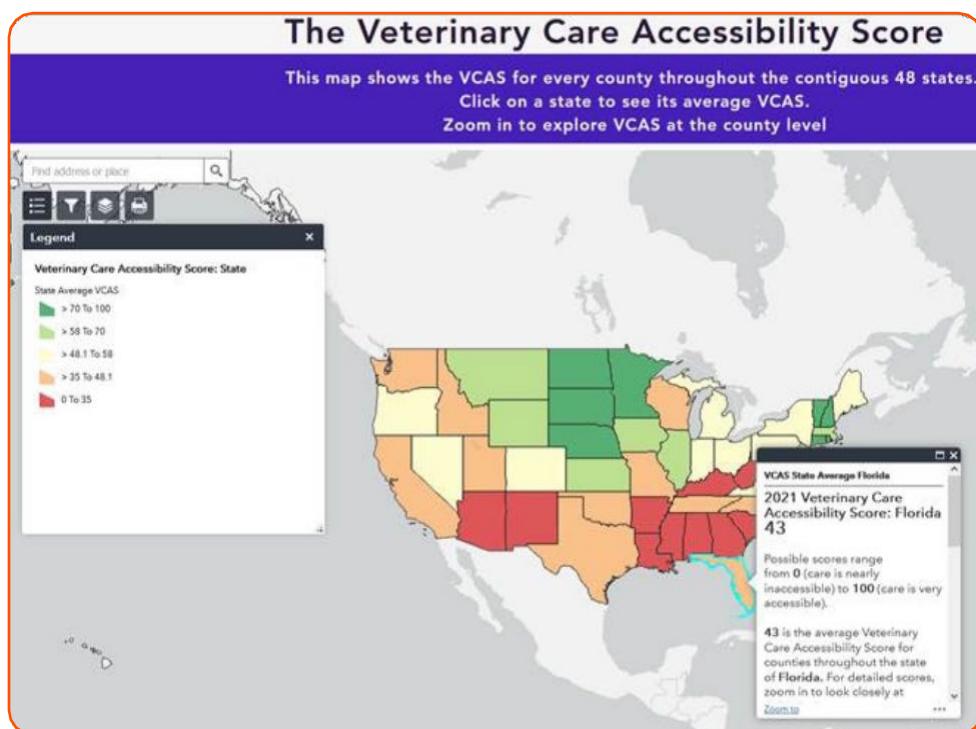


**Research indicates that many pets do not regularly see a veterinarian, often because their owners confront significant barriers to obtaining veterinary care for their pets, including affordability, and such obstacles can result in pet owners forgoing or postponing veterinary care or relinquishing pets.**



- In 2020, the chief economist for the American Veterinary Medical Association estimated that over 50 million U.S. pets, approximately one-third of all pets in the U.S., do not see a veterinarian at least once a year.<sup>1</sup>

- One study found that 40% of cat owners had not taken their animal to a veterinarian in the past year.<sup>2</sup>

- A study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* indicated that cost of care was cited frequently as an obstacle to veterinary care.<sup>3</sup>

- A national study initiated by the Access to Veterinary Care Coalition (AVCC) found that one

out of four pet owners experience barriers to veterinary care, and the “overwhelming barrier for all groups of pet owners and types of care (preventive, sick, and emergency care) is financial.”<sup>4</sup>

- A study the ASPCA conducted in Los Angeles revealed that the majority of owners relinquishing pets were doing so based on inability to afford or access medical or spay/neuter services.<sup>5</sup>
- A national study showed that 40 percent of low-income owners who rehomed their pets reported that access to affordable vet care would have helped them keep their pet.<sup>6</sup>
- **The current shortage of veterinarians and other veterinary professionals in the workforce** may worsen problems with access to care.<sup>7</sup> A September 2020 study found that **75 million pets in the U.S. could be without veterinary care by 2030** if we do not update our approach to providing these services.<sup>8</sup>
- Based on data from the Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Census Bureau, Esri, and the American Veterinary Medical Association, **the Veterinary Care Accessibility Score\* for Florida is a 43 out of 100, placing Florida near the bottom third of states in access to care.** This impacts both rural and urban underserved areas. For example, Miami-Dade County has a VCAS score of 23, indicating that veterinary care is difficult to access. On intake at the [ASPCA Miami Community Veterinary Clinic \(CVC\)](#), we ask our clients if the pet has been to a vet before. In 2022, 48% had not been to a vet before; excluding juvenile animals 5 months or younger and unknown age animals, 34% of pets entering care at the CVC clinic in 2022 had never been to a vet.

**Data from Veterinary Care Accessibility Project\* Demonstrate  
Florida Pet Owners Deserve Better Access to Veterinary Care**

Florida County	Veterinary Care Accessibility Score out of 100*	Florida County	Veterinary Care Accessibility Score out of 100*
Alachua	46	Lake	68
Baker	54	Lee	70
Bay	57	Leon	61
Bradford	12	Levy	27
Brevard	80	Liberty	12
Broward	58	Madison	6
Calhoun	15	Manatee	77
Charlotte	83	Marion	55
Citrus	56	Martin	84
Clay	88	Miami-Dade	23
Collier	77	Monroe	63
Columbia	50	Nassau	94
DeSoto	4	Okaloosa	81
Dixie	10	Okeechobee	15
Duval	49	Orange	51
Escambia	64	Osceola	28
Flagler	75	Palm Beach	70
Franklin	20	Pasco	66
Gadsden	3	Pinellas	64
Gilchrist	21	Polk	37
Glades	15	Putnam	12
Gulf	37	Santa Rosa	96
Hamilton	1	Sarasota	87
Hardee	8	Seminole	88
Hendry	3	St. Johns	99
Hernando	66	St. Lucie	52
Highlands	26	Sumter	94
Hillsborough	54	Suwannee	30
Holmes	5	Taylor	9
Indian River	78	Union	13
Jackson	6	Volusia	61
Jefferson	53	Wakulla	87
Lafayette	2	Walton	69
		Washington	14

## **A survey of U.S. pet owners conducted by ASPCA's Strategy and Research Department in June 2022 revealed the following about access to veterinary care and telemedicine:**

**About ¼ of pet owners surveyed reported that there was a time in the past two years that they wanted or needed vet care and were not able to get it. Among those who reported not being able to get care, the survey found the following:**

- Almost half reported that they were not able to get preventative care; 37% reported they were not able to get sick care; and 17% reported they were not able to get emergency care for their animal.
- 43% reported they couldn't afford care; 19% reported they didn't know where to get the care; 19% reported they couldn't find a provider who spoke their language; 19% reported they didn't have a way to get to the care; and 11% said they didn't have a leash or carrier.
- 30% reported that they did an internet search to find ways to fix the problem themselves; 29% reported that they didn't get to a vet right away but went eventually; and 23% reported that they asked a friend what they should do. Additionally, 15% reported they gave their pet to a shelter or rescue so they could fix the problem, and 15% reported having a vet put their animal to sleep.

**More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) that had an unmet need for vet care in the past two years reported an interest in using veterinary telemedicine if it were available, which was significantly higher than those who did not have an unmet need (41%).**

**Two out of three respondents (66%) that had an unmet need for vet care in the past two years reported that they would see a vet more often if telemedicine were available.**

<sup>1</sup>Larkin, Malinda. (2020). New, old challenges beg for radical change in veterinary profession. *JAVMA News*. <https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2020-12-15/new-old-challenges-beg-radical-change-veterinary-profession>

<sup>2</sup>Volk, Id.

<sup>3</sup>Volk, Id.

<sup>4</sup> Access to Veterinary Care Coalition. (2018). Access to Veterinary Care: Barriers, Current Practices, and Public Policy. <https://pphe.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/avcc-report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Dolan, E., Scotto, J., Slater, M. & Weiss, E. (2015). "Risk factors for dog relinquishment to a Los Angeles municipal animal shelter: A case control study." *Animals*. 5: 1311-1328.

<sup>6</sup>Weiss, E., Gramann, S., Spain, V., & Slater, M. (2015). "Goodbye to a good friend: An exploration of the re-homing of cats and dogs in the U.S." *Open Journal of Animal Sciences*. 5: 435- 456.

<sup>7</sup>Snyder, Alec. (2021). Covid-19 pandemic magnifies workforce crisis in veterinary field. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/20/us/vet-tech-shortage-burnout/index.html>  
*Today's Veterinary Business*. (2022). AVMA is Urged to Address Veterinarian Shortage. <https://todaysveterinarybusiness.com/avma-veterinarian-shortage-letter/>

Hickman, Renee. (2021). Vet shortages are the latest wrinkle in the pandemic puppy boom. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2021/10/21/vet-shortages-covid-puppies-dogs-pandemic-pets/>

<sup>8</sup>*Veterinary Practice News*. (2020). Staffing shortage threatens health of 75 million pets by 2030: Banfield addressed industry-wide shortage at its annual summit. <https://www.veterinarianpracticenews.com/75-million-pets-may-lose-access-to-care-by-2030/>

\* As of 1/06/2023. Source: Veterinary Care Accessibility Project. Veterinary Care Accessibility Map. Scores based on data from American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Esri, and U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.accessstovetcare.org/vcas-map>



## EXPAND ACCESS TO VETERINARY CARE: SUPPORT SB 1708 (Gaetz) & HB 1509 (Johnson) Veterinary License Portability

### THE ISSUE

A chronic nationwide shortage of veterinarians is making it harder for pet owners, animal shelters, and spay/neuter clinics to access licensed veterinarians. One tool for alleviating workforce shortages is license reciprocity or portability, also known as licensure by endorsement. This process expands the available pool of licensed veterinarians by enabling veterinarians who are licensed in good standing in another state to have their out-of-state license recognized in Florida.

A recent article in *Today's Veterinary Business* describes the license portability issue and legislative solution: "Contributing to shortage-linked problems are burdensome processes and unnecessary restrictions on license portability across jurisdictions. The legal barriers restrict veterinarians and veterinary technicians from freely going where they are most needed to provide medical care to animals of all kinds. Anticompetitive policies on license portability are damaging. However, state veterinary boards or legislatures are empowered to address workforce shortages and expand access to veterinary care. Doing its part, the American Veterinary Medical Association's House of Delegates, voting at its winter 2025 meeting, unanimously passed a policy favoring license portability."<sup>1</sup>

### EXISTING LAW

The practice of veterinary medicine in Florida is regulated by the Board of Veterinary Medicine as authorized under F.S.S. Chapter 474. F.S.S. §474.217 provides for veterinary licensure by endorsement but requires that applicants must have been licensed for three consecutive years in another state immediately preceding the application for licensure.

<sup>1</sup> <https://todaysveterinarybusiness.com/license-portability-politics-and-policy-1225/>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and

### THE PROPOSAL

This legislation would amend F.S.S. §474.217 to remove the prior out-of-state continuous service requirements consistent with eighteen states that already honor a licensed veterinarian's freedom to gain a license in another state, provided the applicant currently holds a license in good standing in another state or jurisdiction. All other requirements for licensure by endorsement would remain unchanged.

### THE BENEFIT TO FLORIDIANS AND ANIMALS

Passage of this bill would draw more licensed veterinary professionals to Florida by streamlining the licensure by endorsement process. It would reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on licensed professional veterinarians, including retired or semi-retired veterinarians who are licensed and in good standing in another jurisdiction, empowering them to more readily serve Florida clients and patients who are struggling to access veterinary care during the longstanding and chronic veterinary shortage. Since the Florida legislature expanded access to veterinary telemedicine in 2024, veterinarians in other states who receive Florida licenses through this policy could more readily serve Floridians over telemedicine as well.

Florida has a significant population of part-year residents often referred to as "snowbirds," including veterinarians who may spend as much as half of the year in our state. This legislation would more efficiently enable eligible veterinarians to provide these services to Florida's communities, including rural areas where the shortage is particularly acute.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture. Veterinary Services Shortage Map.  
<https://nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map>

## American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Policy

### **License by endorsement**

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/license-endorsement>

The AVMA recognizes the need for mobility of veterinarians and veterinary technicians and encourages state authorities to adopt legislation and regulations that improve licensing portability, while protecting animal and public health. The AVMA also encourages the use of data-sharing programs between states to facilitate the efficient transfer of license information.

The AVMA endorses the use of temporary licensure for qualified applicants until approval is finalized, as well as the removal of requirements that create unnecessary barriers to licensure of qualified individuals.

The AVMA encourages states to streamline their process of license by endorsement by not requiring documentation that has already been verified by other states. The AVMA believes that an applicant should be qualified for license by endorsement when they:

- Have provided proof of a record of good standing for the state(s) in which they are licensed and have been previously licensed
- Have acceptably completed state-specific jurisprudence testing, as determined by the state where licensure is being sought

# License Portability For Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians



The veterinary shortage across America is chronic and acute, affecting small and large practices alike, whether rural, suburban or urban. Contributing to this issue are the burdensome processes and unnecessary restrictions on licensing portability across jurisdictions in the United States that restrict veterinarians and veterinary technicians from freely moving their license to places where they are most needed to provide important healthcare access to pets and their owners. Anti-competitive and prohibitive policies on license portability are outdated and damaging. State veterinary medical boards can implement effective solutions to address these shortages while expanding necessary access to care. **The AVMA House of Delegates unanimously passed a policy in favor of license portability during their recent Winter 2025 meeting.** This policy, while covering the basics of professional credentials and good standing, sends a strong message that barriers to license portability should be removed.

**States that provide limited or in some cases manageable exceptions to the continuous service requirements**

11

**States that honor the freedom of a licensed veterinarian to gain a license in another state**

18

**States, including DC, that impose a condition of service in a prior state regardless of previous passage of the NAVLE**

22

## ***State License Portability by Numbers***

Recent graduates of accredited veterinary colleges can take the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) and be licensed without any prior experience. Why is an experienced veterinarian required, in 22 states (including DC), to re-take the NAVLE unless she meets a handful of arbitrary and unnecessary conditions? For example, in some states, a break of one year (regardless of the reason) disqualifies her from pursuing licensure in a new state without re-taking the NAVLE. These restrictions are inconsistent with other professional bodies, such as law, architecture and engineering, who recognize license portability.

No data suggests that public health or the welfare of animals is at risk from licensed veterinarians seeking to gain a license in a new state. More than ever, pet owners want the freedom to relocate for a variety of reasons, sometimes to a new state. It is vital to bring all state veterinary laws and regulations in sync with the current needs of veterinary professionals with license portability. Veterinarians should have the ability to move and practice wherever suits them and their family best, provided they have met the basic requirements of veterinary credentials: accredited degree, NAVLE passage (VTNE for vet techs), and license in good standing in all states in which they are licensed.