
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the health of humans
2 and animals are inextricably related - a concept that has come
3 to be recognized as the "One Health" approach. Physicians and
4 veterinarians need to interact and communicate on health issues
5 important to both animals and humans.

6 Zoonotic diseases are diseases that are caused by infection
7 from viruses, bacteria, parasites, or fungi, and can spread
8 between animals and people. These diseases can cause illness of
9 varying severity or even death in people. The Centers for
10 Disease Control and Prevention reports that zoonotic diseases
11 are very common and every year tens of thousands of Americans
12 will get sick from them.

13 Zoonotic diseases can be transmitted directly or indirectly
14 to humans by consumption of contaminated foodstuffs or contact
15 with infected animals. Leptospirosis, *E. coli* infection,
16 methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* infection (MRSA),
17 ringworm, *toxoplasmosis*, *salmonella* infection, *tuberculosis*,



1 H1N1 and H3N2 influenza virus, also known as bird flu or swine
2 flu, *brucellosis* caused by *Brucella suis*, and *angiostrongyliasis*
3 *cantonensis*, more commonly known as rat lungworm disease, are
4 examples of zoonotic diseases. Zoonoses are animal diseases
5 that can be transmitted to humans and are very well understood
6 and studied by veterinarians.

7 The legislature also finds that in the past, the department
8 of health had a public health veterinarian position that was
9 filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine. David Sasaki, doctor
10 of veterinary medicine and a world expert on leptospirosis, had
11 filled the position and also oversaw the production of public
12 health publications that were distributed to Hawaii physicians
13 and veterinarians.

14 The legislature further finds that the publications were
15 well-received and helped educate physicians about disease
16 reporting requirements, the prevalence of a number of diseases
17 in the State, and the appropriate treatment for the diseases.
18 This information included resistance to or developing resistance
19 to antibiotics of common venereal diseases including gonorrhea,
20 and information providing a deeper understanding of the risk of
21 animal diseases to humans.



1 The legislature additionally finds that most health
2 departments have a position filled by a doctor of veterinary
3 medicine that is typically designated as a public health
4 veterinarian. Establishing a veterinary medical officer
5 position, such as a public health veterinarian, within the
6 department of health will help combat the spread of rat lungworm
7 and other zoonotic diseases in the State's human population and
8 support statewide efforts to protect and improve human health.
9 A public health veterinarian could also resume public health
10 publications, disseminate those publications in electronic form,
11 and couple the publications with continuing medical education
12 for physicians, nurses, and veterinarians to help ensure the
13 continued competence of the State's health care workforce.

14 Reestablishing a public health veterinarian position in the
15 department of health will also help battle the current outbreak
16 of rat lungworm disease in humans, dogs, cats, and horses in the
17 State. In January of this year (January 5-8, 2020), the sixth
18 international workshop on *angiostrongylus* and *angiostrongyliasis*
19 was held in Hilo, Hawaii. *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* is the
20 roundworm that causes a disease in humans which invades the



1 brain and causes death and disability. *Angiostrongyliasis*
2 refers to the disease caused by the rat lungworm parasite.

3 One full session at this recent conference focused on rat
4 lungworm in other animals, principally dogs, and documented how
5 dogs can act as a sentinel for the presence of slugs or snails
6 infected with rat lungworm disease. There was also discussion
7 about how the diagnosis and treatment of rat lungworm disease in
8 dogs can inform our diagnosis and treatment of the disease in
9 man.

10 The veterinarians who presented at the meeting strongly
11 supported the reestablishment of the position of a state public
12 health veterinarian in Hawaii and felt it could be crucial in
13 addressing the outbreak of rat lungworm disease in both humans
14 and dogs. Cats and horses have also been affected in Hawaii,
15 albeit with fewer documented cases. The Hawaii veterinarians
16 who spoke indicated that the Hawaii Veterinarian Association
17 could help in finding candidates for the position if it was
18 reestablished this legislative session.

19 The legislature also recognizes that global warming
20 contributes to the increase of the number and types of viruses,
21 bacteria, parasites, and fungi that are spread between animals



1 and humans, which makes early detection and study of these
2 vectors and the illnesses they cause imperative to protect
3 public health.

4 The purpose of this Act is to reestablish and fund one
5 full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical
6 officer position within the department of health.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
9 and to read as follows:

10 "§321-_____ Veterinary medical officer. (a) There is
11 established within the department of health a veterinary medical
12 officer position to oversee the protection and improvement of
13 human health through measures for the detection, investigation,
14 assessment, prevention, control, and eradication of zoonotic
15 diseases.

16 (b) The veterinary medical officer shall possess a doctor
17 of veterinary medicine degree from a veterinary college meeting
18 all the standards established by the American Veterinary Medical
19 Association and a license to practice veterinary medicine
20 granted pursuant to chapter 471."



1 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for
 4 the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE)
 5 permanent veterinary medical officer position in the department
 6 of health for the purposes of this Act.

7 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
 8 health for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.

11

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H.B. NO. 1891

Report Title:

Veterinary Medical Officer; DOH; Zoonotic Diseases;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes and appropriates funds for one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position within the department of health.

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