
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. Previously, David
10 Sasaki, a doctor of veterinary medicine and a world expert on
11 leptospirosis, had filled the position and also oversaw the
12 production of public health publications that were distributed
13 to Hawaii physicians and veterinarians.

14 The legislature further finds that the public health
15 publications were well-received and helped educate physicians
16 about disease reporting requirements, the prevalence of a number
17 of diseases in the State, and the appropriate treatment for the
18 diseases. This publication included information on the
19 resistance to or developing resistance to antibiotics of common
20 venereal diseases, including gonorrhoea, and information



1 providing a deeper understanding of the risk of animal diseases
2 to humans.

3 The legislature additionally finds that many federal health
4 agencies or departments and most state health departments have a
5 position filled by a doctor of veterinary medicine that is
6 typically designated as a public health veterinarian.

7 Reestablishing a veterinary medical officer position, such as a
8 public health veterinarian, within the department of health will
9 help combat the spread of rat lungworm and other zoonotic
10 diseases in the State's human population and support statewide
11 efforts to protect and improve human health. A public health
12 veterinarian could also resume public health publications,
13 disseminate those publications in electronic form, and couple
14 the publications with continuing medical education for
15 physicians, nurses, and veterinarians to help ensure the
16 continued competence of the State's health care workforce.

17 Reestablishing a public health veterinarian position in the
18 department of health will also help battle the current outbreak
19 of rat lungworm disease in humans, dogs, cats, and horses in the
20 State. In January of this year (January 5-8, 2020), the sixth
21 international workshop on *angiostrongylus* and *angiostrongyliasis*



1 was held in Hilo, Hawaii. *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* is the
2 roundworm that causes a disease in humans that invades the brain
3 and causes death and disability. *Angiostrongyliasis* refers to
4 the disease caused by the rat lungworm parasite.

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

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



1 The legislature also recognizes that global warming
2 contributes to the increase of the number and types of viruses,
3 bacteria, parasites, and fungi that are spread between animals
4 and humans, which makes the early detection and study of these
5 vectors and the illnesses they cause imperative to protect
6 public health.

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

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

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

19 (b) The veterinary medical officer shall possess a doctor
20 of veterinary medicine degree from a veterinary college meeting
21 all the standards established by the American Veterinary Medical



1 Association and a license to practice veterinary medicine
2 granted pursuant to chapter 471."

3 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$95,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2020-2021 for the
6 establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent
7 veterinary medical officer position in the department of health
8 and \$15,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
9 year 2020-2021 for operational costs for the purposes of this
10 Act.

11 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
12 of health for the purposes of this Act.

13 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

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



H.B. NO. 1891
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

Report Title:

Veterinary Medical Officer; DOH; Zoonotic Diseases;
Appropriation

Description:

Establishes and appropriates \$110,000 for one full-time equivalent (1.00 FTE) permanent veterinary medical officer position within the department of health and operating costs. Effective July 1, 2020. (SD1)

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