



# Why It Makes *Sense* to **EXEMPT VETERINARIANS** from the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Vote **YES** on **HB 91** and **SB 132**

## The Issue

Facing an unprecedented opioid crisis in 2016, legislation was enacted in Alaska that requires participation in the PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM (PDMP) by all holders of a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) license, regardless of their professional discipline. The law requires veterinarians to monitor **HUMAN** prescription records and report **ANIMAL** dispensations to the PDMP.

## The Problem

- The PDMP is designed for tracking human prescriptions, not animals.
- Animals do not have a permanent trackable identifier rendering a poorly designed system that does not help identify diversion and abuse.
- The information from the PDMP is not useable by the veterinarian.
- Viewing the owner's prescription history raises privacy concerns.

## Why Does This Matter?

- ✓ The PDMP is not compatible with veterinary medicine. The veterinary data is not easily interpreted alongside the human data and therefore complicates effective interpretation of the data. The PDMP does not impact a veterinarian's treatment for an animal.
- ✓ Opioid medications prescribed by veterinarians (728,223) were only 0.34% of the total opioid prescriptions (214 million) that were dispensed by U.S. retail pharmacies in 2017. Veterinarians in Alaska from 2015—2018 prescribed .3% to 1% of total Morphine Milligram Equivalents (MMEs).
- ✓ 34 other states exempt veterinarians (West Virginia in 2021), acknowledging the differences between human and veterinary patients and that veterinarians are not a significant source of abused or diverted drugs.
- ✓ The Alaska Board of Veterinary Examiners has reported the PDMP to be an unusable database. The cost to investigate veterinarians who fail to use the PDMP correctly is on track to more than double the investigative costs over the previous fiscal year (first half of 2021 fiscal year was >\$40,000).
- ✓ Licensing fees for veterinarians will sharply increase as a result of the cost to conduct needless investigations of veterinarians with DEA licenses. The cost of doing business will be passed on to consumers. The DEA oversees the usage of controlled substances by veterinarians.

## The Solution

**Exempt veterinarians** from the PDMP. **Implement strategies** for the veterinary profession that have been shown to combat the human opioid epidemic. The AKVMA supports the American Veterinary Medical Association's objectives to create practical and effective solutions when considering opioid-related laws and regulations that impact the practice of veterinary medicine.

## AKVMA SUPPORTS THE OBJECTIVES OF AVMA IN ADDRESSING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and its members are gravely concerned about the national opioid epidemic. As healthcare providers who administer and prescribe controlled substances, we recognize our responsibility in contributing to solutions for this crisis. Many unique aspects of the practice of veterinary medicine must be considered in the development of laws and regulations that govern the use of opioids and controlled substances in animal patients. **The AVMA strongly recommends that veterinarians, legislators, state veterinary medical boards, and state pharmacy boards work together to create practical and effective solutions when considering opioid-related laws and regulations that impact the practice of veterinary medicine.**

### In regard to veterinarians, the AVMA supports the following objectives and efforts to address the national opioid epidemic:

- Continuing education (CE) on judicious use, compliance, security, and prescribing of opioids and other controlled substances, with an emphasis on identifying and preventing human misuse and diversion. Veterinarians are not trained to evaluate the appropriateness of a human prescription and are not trained in the privacy practices surrounding human medical information.
  - ◊ Exemption of veterinarians from accessing private health information and prescription data on a person prior to prescribing or dispensing controlled substances for an animal.
- Options for reporting of suspected opioid and controlled substance drug shoppers and/or diversion, with immunity from prosecution for the reporter.
- Exemption of veterinarians from mandatory electronic prescribing for controlled substances due to the lack of veterinary electronic medical record compatibility with electronic prescription programs. Remediation of this problem would require funding, resulting in an increased financial burden to taxpayers and clients.
- Research to determine the prevalence of veterinary drug shoppers and to clarify the degree to which veterinary prescriptions impact the human opioid epidemic.

### If participation in a prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) is mandated:

- Develop software that captures accurate data from veterinary opioid prescriptions to benefit human health.
- Until veterinarians have effective prescription software equivalent to human healthcare (i.e. automatic PDMP reporting), regulations should be drafted with consideration for the burden of compliance.



### Questions? Contact:

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