



Please Support SB1053 veterinary medicine; electronic means (Shope)

PROBLEM: America faces a chronic and acute shortage of veterinarians as there has only been one new veterinary school in the 35 years between 1979 and 2014. In addition, pet ownership is outpacing the number of new veterinarians in the US. As a result, many animal owners in Arizona and the United States cannot get veterinary appointments when they are needed, especially in rural areas and on tribal lands.

BACKGROUND: Telemedicine for human healthcare is approved in all 50 states and has operated successfully for over 25 years in many states. Telemedicine for people is allowed across all of Arizona.

During the COVID pandemic, Arizona waived restrictions on telemedicine for animals and humans. Telemedicine for humans was permanently adopted but telemedicine for animals was not. During this 2-year period, there were no complaints made to the Arizona Board of Veterinary Medicine about injury caused to an animal from telemedicine care.

Beyond Arizona, telemedicine for animals is allowed in several states (Idaho, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Florida, Oklahoma) and across Canada. Just like our experience in Arizona, there has not been a single complaint to any of these respective licensing boards about any injury caused to an animal from this form of care.

SOLUTION: SB1053 will allow animal owners to establish a veterinarian client patient relationship virtually with a licensed Arizona veterinarian through electronic means. In addition, the veterinarian may not prescribe drugs for more than 30 days with a single 30-day renewal. Any additional prescription requires an in-person visit. Longer term prescriptions are only allowed with an in-person visit. Prescriptions for controlled substances require an in-person visit.

SB1053 does not require veterinarians to practice telemedicine. It's a free choice for veterinarians and animal owners. This is a decision best left with the animal professionals and animal owners.

Telemedicine does not replace in-clinic veterinary care but is a vital tool supplementing veterinary practices and extending their reach into rural and tribal areas that currently lack veterinary care. There is evidence that animal owners are more likely to seek out veterinary health care for their animals when they have the access to telehealth services, particularly in rural and underserved areas, where animal owners do not have access to in-person care.