

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2024
By: Kolkhorst
Agriculture & Livestock
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Legislature created the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (Vet Lab) in 1967 to provide laboratory services that aid in identification of animal diseases; perform tests required for shipments of animals; and identify potential epidemics through disease surveillance. The Vet Lab's current mission is to aid and educate the animal industries of Texas in identifying and preventing animal diseases, nutritional deficiencies, and intoxications so as to make productive use of the state's natural resources. Through its diagnostic testing, the Vet Lab helps provide tests for national and international shipment of animals and their products, and helps protect public safety by identifying those diseases transmissible from animals to humans. The Vet Lab is subject to the Sunset Act and will be abolished on September 1, 2007, unless continued by the Legislature. H.B. 2024 would continue the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory for another twelve years.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

Continuation of the agency

H.B. 2024 continues the Vet Lab for 12 years.

Applies standard Sunset across-the board recommendations

H.B. 2024 adds standard Sunset language prohibiting the Vet Lab's Executive Director, high-level employees, and their spouses from serving in certain positions with a Texas trade association in the field of veterinary medicine. The bill also adds standard Sunset language requiring the Vet Lab to make effective use of technology in its delivery of services and provision of information to the public; develop a policy that encourages the use of negotiated rulemaking and alternative dispute resolution; and maintain information on all complaints and to notify the parties about policies for and status of complaints.

Requires the agency to provide notice and opportunity for public comment when developing its fee schedule.

H.B. 2024 requires the Vet Lab to provide 30 days notice of proposed fees on its website and in its monthly newsletter; give all interested persons an opportunity to submit written comments regarding fees; and fully consider all public comment received before any changes to the fee schedule may be adopted.

Clarifies the Vet Lab's powers and duties in statute

H.B. 2024 establishes the Vet Lab's current mission and functions regarding disease diagnostics, surveillance, and reporting. The bill establishes the Vet Lab's powers and duties by requiring the Lab to provide testing to aid in the identification of disease; provide tests required for intrastate, interstate, or international animal shipments; identify and monitor animal disease epidemics; and, assist livestock owners and veterinarians with problems associated with disease identification, diagnosis, and treatment. The bill requires the Vet Lab to report disease findings to the appropriate state or federal agency, as specified in law. The bill authorizes the Vet Lab to perform other diagnostic services or activities that the Lab determines necessary to address new and emerging threats and to provide information to veterinarians, animal owners, and the public developed through the Lab's diagnostic testing efforts. The bill also authorizes the Vet Lab to perform other functions as necessary to provide diagnostics, surveillance, and reporting of animal diseases. Finally, the bill requires the Vet Lab to provide diagnostic testing for companion animals and out-of-state clients only when staff, facilities, and supplies are not required for in-state livestock testing.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.

H.B. 2024 80(R)

