



September 6, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Schatz:

As one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations, with more than 89,000 member veterinarians worldwide engaged in a wide variety of professional activities and dedicated to the art and science of veterinary medicine, the mission of the AVMA is to lead the profession by advocating for its members and advancing the science and practice of veterinary medicine to improve animal health and welfare and human health. The Association has a long-term concern for, and commitment to, the welfare and humane treatment of animals. I am writing to express our concern for H.Amdt. 226 to H.R.3219 Make America Secure Appropriations Act of 2018, which was passed by the House and sent to the Senate on July 31, 2017. The amendment bars the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program from conducting research using dogs and stipulates that VA funding for the following purposes is prohibited: "to purchase, breed, transport, house, feed, maintain, dispose of, or experiment on dogs as part of the conduct of any study assigned to pain Category D or E."

The AVMA policy on the **Use of Animals in Research, Testing, and Education** states:

The AVMA recognizes that animals have an important role in research, testing, and education for continued improvement of human and animal health and welfare. The AVMA also recognizes that humane care of animals used in research, testing, and education is an integral part of those activities. In keeping with these concerns, the AVMA endorses the principles embodied in the '3Rs' tenet of Russell and Burch (1959). These principles are: replacement of animals with non-animal methods wherever feasible; reduction of the number of animals consistent with sound experimental design; and refinement of experimental methods to eliminate or reduce animal pain and distress.

The use of animals in research, testing, and education is a privilege carrying with it unique professional, scientific, and moral obligations, and ethical responsibilities. The AVMA encourages proper stewardship of all animals, and supports the judicious use of animals in meaningful research, testing, and education programs. Third party review of welfare of all animals is essential for all facilities.

Dogs are used in vital research that will help improve the lives of our veterans by finding treatments for diseases and conditions affecting the veteran community, including studies on cardiology, diabetes and spinal cord injuries. Dog studies have advanced our understanding of autoimmune function, cancer, epilepsy, immunodeficiency, metabolic disease, narcolepsy and vision. The AVMA is committed to ensure that animal welfare law, regulations, and enforcement support oversight of research that results in experiments that are

designed to use the smallest number of animals necessary to achieve meaningful results and in such a way as to minimize discomfort to those animals involved. Over 99 percent of all VA-sponsored animal studies are conducted on mice or rats. The percentage is consistent with lab animal use patterns across all U.S. research institutions. VA researchers only use dogs in research when the dog model is clearly the most suitable for the scientific study. Currently, just 0.05 percent VA lab animal use (85 dogs) are used in VA-sponsored studies.

If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, Director, Governmental Relations Division, at 202-289-3205 or via e-mail to mlutschaunig@avma.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark T. Lutschaunig, VMD MBA". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark Lutschaunig, VMD MBA
Director, Governmental Relations Division

c. Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee