

Contact:
Lauren Zajicek
Associate Director, Communications
(202) 296-9680
Lauren.zajicek@nasda.org

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NASDA Foundation receives USDA grant to introduce veterinary students to careers in state and regulatory veterinary medicine

ARLINGTON, Va. – The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation received a Veterinary Services Grant Program award from USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture to expand veterinary students’ exposure to careers in state and regulatory veterinary medicine. The three-year project, “[Strengthening the Regulatory Veterinary Workforce](#),” will support nine veterinary students through paid, 10- to 12-week summer internships in State Animal Health Official offices. Through hands-on experience and mentoring, students will learn how state veterinary teams protect animal health, support agriculture and help safeguard the food supply.

“Many veterinary students have limited opportunities to explore the range of careers available in state and regulatory veterinary medicine,” NASDA Foundation Senior Director Chris Jones said. “This program will give students firsthand experience working alongside state animal health professionals and help them see how their veterinary training can contribute to public service. We are grateful to USDA for supporting this investment in the future veterinary workforce.”

Participating state animal health offices will host and mentor students, providing exposure to responsibilities such as disease surveillance, emergency preparedness and response, animal health programs, regulatory activities and stakeholder engagement. The NASDA Foundation will coordinate student recruitment, placement and program support, with three students participating each year. Students will also participate in professional development and networking opportunities, including the [NASDA Next Generation](#) program. These experiences will complement their internships by connecting them with state agriculture leaders, peers and agricultural professionals.

By increasing awareness of state and regulatory veterinary careers, the project aims to strengthen the workforce pipeline supporting animal disease prevention, preparedness and response. This effort will help students understand different career pathways and the essential role state veterinary teams play in serving producers and protecting agricultural communities.

NASDA members expressed their strong support for the program, sharing their perspectives on the impact of hands-on experiences.

“The agriculture industry relies on veterinarians as the first line of defense in identifying and treating animal disease,” Nevada Agriculture Director J.J. Goicoechea, DVM, said. “Here in Nevada, where we are experiencing a veterinarian shortage, it’s critical that we strengthen the veterinary workforce so that we can support animal wellbeing and the agriculture industry. As a veterinarian myself, I know firsthand that these experiences have the potential to shape career trajectories, build essential competencies and strengthen the type of workforce development that states like Nevada rely on.”

“The people working behind the scenes to protect animal health are an important part of our nation’s agricultural security,” Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner Mike Strain, DVM, said. “We need well-trained



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation
nasda.org/foundation
4350 North Fairfax Drive, #810
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 202-296-9680

professionals who understand the responsibility that comes with this work and are ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Giving veterinary students the opportunity to explore these careers helps ensure we have the knowledge and expertise needed to protect our agricultural industries for generations to come.”

“Regulatory veterinary medicine is on the frontline of defense against animal disease threats that can devastate herds, disrupt markets and harm rural communities,” Nebraska Agriculture Director Sherry Vinton said. “By supporting paid internships that give vet students real-world experience in state animal health offices, we are building a stronger pipeline of professionals who understand the science of animal health, government regulation and the practical needs of producers. By investing in these opportunities, we ensure the next generation of future veterinarians are ready to serve in the critical roles that safeguard our herds and keep agriculture strong.”

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The NASDA Foundation is the only educational and research organization that directly serves the nation’s state departments of agriculture. The NASDA Foundation’s mission is to enhance American food and agricultural communities through education, outreach and research. The NASDA Foundation works with states to nourish people and communities while serving as the stewards of the environment and public trust. To learn more about the NASDA Foundation, please visit nasda.org/nasda-foundation.



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