

Large-Animal Veterinarians Needed For Southern Missouri

WASHINGTON, D.C.

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) sent a letter to Missouri's chief Animal Health Official asking for special consideration to Southern Missouri counties when making nominations to the federal Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program. Veterinarians working in the counties accepted for the program would be eligible for partial repayment of their educational costs, and Emerson strongly feels young veterinarians should have the opportunity to serve rural counties where small and medium-sized livestock operations are the norm.

"In the southern part of the state, veterinarians are responsible for serving many family-owned ranches – they aren't the biggest operations in our state, but there are lots more of them and they combine to raise just as many animals. It is a completely different challenge than serving large, concentrated animal operations in other parts of Missouri," Emerson said. "It is more than fitting that young veterinarians

just starting out and saddled with debt would be able to take part in a program that encourages them to care for large animals which end up in our food supply. Our producers do an exceptional job of raising livestock for the state, the nation and the world. We need to be sure veterinarians have the same incentives to serve counties with many small producers as they do to serve counties with a few large operations."

Emerson noted one other important trend in veterinary services in Southern Missouri:

"Many of our veterinarians are at the point in their careers where they would like to wind down their work life in order to make time for family. Yet we have a real shortage of young veterinarians choosing to work with large animals in the rural areas where our nation's ranchers really need their services. I hope that changes in the future, and one way to help is to ensure that our Southern Missouri veterinarians are able to take a leadership role so they can raise the profile of the small producers who they work with every day," Emerson said. Δ



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