

AVMA STATEMENT UNDERSTANDING ACCREDITATION CHANGES



Dear colleagues,

As proposed changes to the U.S. Department of Education's accreditation regulations continue to evolve, the AVMA is actively engaged and advocating for students, veterinary teams, veterinary education, and the public.

We want the veterinary community to understand what **the proposed changes could mean for veterinary medical education, and how AVMA is preparing for their potential implications.**

On August 19, the Department of Education proposed changes to accreditation processes that could affect how the AVMA Council on Education® (COE®) operates as an accreditor of veterinary colleges. Among other provisions, accrediting bodies would be prohibited from sharing resources with affiliated professional organizations, such as AVMA. If finalized as proposed, the COE would need to adjust aspects of its structure and operations to maintain federal recognition.

What you need to know

These changes are proposed—they have not been finalized and may be changed during the process. The Department of Education plans to publish final rules on November 1, 2026. Most proposed changes would not take effect until July 2027, with implementation extending into 2028. Many are calling for a longer transition period. The COE remains recognized by the Department of Education (since 1952) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). AVMA's veterinary technology accreditation by the Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities® (CVTEA®) is not affected.

AVMA has carefully reviewed the proposed changes and submitted public comments emphasizing that any changes must protect students, colleges, and the public. We also urged the Department of Education to establish a comprehensive, clearly defined transition process for recognized accreditors affiliated with professional associations. Failure to allow for an extended transition period where an accreditor's recognition is impacted may result in negative unintended consequences on students including interruption of their access to student loans or their ability to seek licensure at the time of graduation. If substantial organizational changes are required, a responsible transition would likely take several years.

AVMA is evaluating the governance, financial, regulatory, and operational steps that would be necessary to ensure uninterrupted, rigorous accreditation and minimize disruption to veterinary education. Any future structure should be informed by those who understand veterinary education, practice, licensure, and the needs of veterinary patients and the public. Above all, **graduates must continue to be appropriately prepared for entry into veterinary practice.**

As we have through the years, AVMA has worked collaboratively with the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) to support accreditation. AVMA will work transparently and proactively with the Department of Education, COE, AAVMC, the academic community, students, practitioners, industry partners, and licensing bodies.

Why the COE and profession-led accreditation matter

AVMA has been committed to advancing the quality of veterinary medical education and accreditation for more than a century. That commitment dates to 1906, when the AVMA began a national effort to evaluate and classify veterinary colleges—laying the foundation for its longstanding role in assuring the quality of veterinary education and preparing highly qualified veterinarians to serve the profession and the public. This formal accreditation structure led to the establishment of the COE in 1946.

Importantly, the **COE is an autonomous accrediting body**. While the AVMA provides support, the COE independently establishes accreditation policies and standards and makes accreditation decisions separately from AVMA.

The COE has been recognized as an accrediting body for veterinary medicine by the Department of Education since 1952. This recognition was voluntarily sought by the COE to substantiate its credibility and demonstrate consistency with the department's published guidelines. Rigorous accreditation remains a cornerstone of quality veterinary education. In addition to upholding accountability and public trust in the veterinary profession, accreditation protects students, veterinary patients, clients, employers, colleges and the public by ensuring that graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and professional competencies needed to practice veterinary medicine. It also supports accountability, educational quality, and public trust.

AVMA believes strong accreditation should be grounded in subject matter expertise, transparency, accountability, evidence-based decisions, and a commitment to educational excellence and innovation—not private business interests. Nonprofit veterinary school accreditation led by veterinarians is crucial to protecting animal and human health. The COE's composition brings together veterinary practitioners, educators, researchers, and public representatives with subject matter expertise across disciplines. This breadth of perspective supports highly specialized education, encourages innovation, and guarantees compliance with rigorous accreditation standards that are grounded in evidence.

Moving accreditation away from a nonprofit, profession-led model could have significant implications for educational quality, accreditation standards, animal health, and public health. Changes to the accreditation structure could also affect accreditation costs for colleges. AVMA currently subsidizes approximately 40-50% of COE accreditation expenses. Absorbing these expenses helps limit the costs that are passed on to colleges and, ultimately, students. Any transition must carefully consider these costs along with potential effects on educational quality.

What comes next

As federal rulemaking continues, AVMA will evaluate the implications of proposed changes, work collaboratively with the veterinary education community, and advocate for an accreditation system that serves students, educational institutions, veterinary teams, the profession, and the public. At the same time, the COE is preparing for adjustments that may be necessary to meet future regulatory requirements while preserving the rigor of its accreditation process.

Our guiding principle is clear: **safeguard the integrity and continuity of veterinary accreditation while ensuring that student progression, graduate licensure, educational quality, and the public's access to a qualified veterinary workforce are not disrupted**. We remain committed to a strong, independent, and effective accreditation system grounded in veterinary expertise and focused on serving students, educational institutions, the veterinary profession, and the public.

We know there will be questions as this process unfolds, and we encourage the veterinary community to rely on factual, verified information. AVMA will provide updates and additional information at avma.org/Accreditation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Quammen, DVM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Quammen, DVM