



The Veterinary Sector

Essential for a healthy Australia

Priorities for a sustainable veterinary profession

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak body representing the veterinary profession nationally. Veterinarians are highly regarded, trusted community members who make a vital contribution to the nation's biosecurity, public health and food security outcomes.

The AVA has provided a united voice for the veterinary profession for over 100 years and is deeply committed to championing and empowering the veterinary profession to thrive now and into the future.

Despite the value of the veterinary sector being well recognised, in 2026, the profession continues to face ongoing challenges that threaten the viability of its workforce. In 2025, Jobs and Skills Australia reaffirmed that the veterinary profession was facing a critical workforce shortage for the ninth consecutive year and called for a national veterinary workforce strategy to address the ongoing skills deficit¹.

With 75% of new and emerging human diseases originating in animals, vets are the guardians of public health. By identifying, diagnosing and treating animal diseases, vets are at the frontline of zoonotic disease surveillance. **Every Australian is impacted by this important work led by the veterinary profession.**



Without dedicated government investment, the profession's capacity to deliver these essential community services is compromised. Whilst the animal health aspect of veterinary work is clear, their critical role in safeguarding Australia's food supply is less understood.

Veterinarians are essential in providing safe and reliable access to animal food products, an industry worth AU\$32.2 billion to the Australian economy each year².

To address these challenges, the AVA has identified **5 critical priorities** that safeguard biosecurity, protect animal health and welfare, preserve public safety and advance the wellbeing of the Australian veterinary workforce. **These priorities call for policies, investment, and funding to secure a sustainable and resilient veterinary sector.**

¹ <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/essential-ingredient-food-supply-chain-workforce>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024-2025f

OUR CHALLENGE	WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	WHAT IS NEEDED?
Robust Veterinary Workforce	Vets provide an essential service that supports the growth of the regional, rural and metropolitan communities around them. Facing persistent labour shortages, a national veterinary workforce strategy, with sustained government investment, is needed to revitalise the profession and attract new vets to rural and regional areas where the skills deficit is now critical.	• \$24 million per year for a HECS-HELP forgiveness scheme that will incentivise new veterinarians to relocate to regional areas by partially or fully forgiving their tertiary education debt upon relocation to target communities. • \$1 million per year to develop a national veterinary workforce strategy, commencing with coordinated and consistent workforce data collection and analysis, to address critical skills shortages.
Vets for Tomorrow	Veterinary students, who represent the future of the profession, face major challenges during their training. Early exposure to rural veterinary practice influences graduates' career choices. Funding to ensure placements in regional areas is essential for sustaining biosecurity, food security, public health, and animal welfare services for these communities. Once graduated veterinarians face ongoing challenges. Whilst their veterinary knowledge is derived from the latest research, new graduate veterinarians often lack the applied knowledge of the livestock industries. Closing this knowledge gap is essential to the profession's ability to deliver on Australia's agricultural and food security goals.	• \$12.2 million per year to include veterinary students in the Commonwealth Prac Payment Scheme. • \$2.5 million per year to assist veterinary businesses to accelerate the post-university skill development of veterinary graduates working in livestock services. • 30 per cent increase in funding rate per veterinary Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) to partially subsidise vet student training.
Mental Health for Vets	Australia needs resilient vets to support our communities, livestock, biosecurity and food production. However, the veterinary workforce faces critical challenges in addressing compassion fatigue, managing exceptionally long working hours in unsupported conditions, and alleviating the significant financial strain of training and practice. Without urgent government investment, veterinary mental health outcomes will continue to decline, and the profession will be unable to provide this essential service to Australian communities into the future.	• \$1.5 million per year for 4 years to fund the extension of the AVA Cultivating Safe Teams project, building psychosocial safety awareness and risk management in veterinary workplaces. • \$1.4 million to further support the delivery of the AVA THRIVE Program to drive improved mental health outcomes for vets.
Sustainable disaster response and wildlife care	The veterinary workforce provides critical biosecurity surveillance, expert animal care during natural disasters and frontline treatment of injured wildlife, often without payment or subsidy. This commitment and high level of care strains the limited financial resources and overburdens a stretched workforce already facing declining mental health outcomes.	• \$7.5 million per year for 4 years for a pilot program subsidising private vets who treat injured wildlife. • Establish a national animal disaster fund that will subsidise private vets caring for animals during natural disasters or extreme weather events.
Protecting animal health and welfare	Vets are Australia's frontline in protecting our world class animal health and welfare standards. Vets provide trusted oversight in maintaining and protecting these standards, which underpin the nation's lucrative trade and export relationships and food security outcomes.	• \$5 million per year for a national veterinary antibiotic usage and resistance surveillance system.

VETERINARY IMPACT

Pet care expenditure⁵

\$21.3bn

Dogs \$13.21bn

Cats \$5.91bn



Revenue of Australian
Veterinary industry³

\$5.7bn

Veterinary Businesses
(Practices) in Australia¹

3,793

The Veterinary
sector employs:

29,661 people⁴

15,816 vets

with total wages \$2.1bn⁶

The gross value of fisheries
and aquaculture¹²



\$4bn



Livestock disposals and
livestock products¹¹

\$32.2bn

\$12.8bn

for cattle and calves

\$3.7bn

for sheep and lambs

\$4.0bn for poultry

\$1.7bn for pigs

\$2.7bn for wool

\$6.2bn for milk

The gross revenue
of racing
(horse and greyhound)¹³

\$4.6bn



1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13 IBISWorld 2025

5 Animal Medicines Australia 2025

11 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024–2025

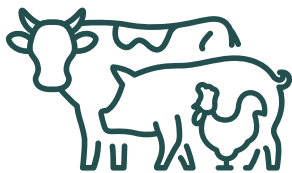
INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT



Assisting
20.4 million
Australian
pet owners



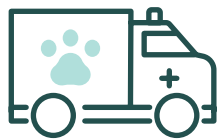
Supporting food
security for
27.89 million
Australians



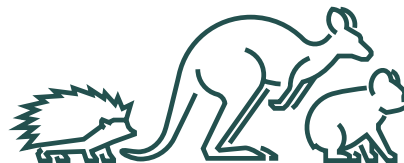
Securing
428,000 jobs
in Australian
livestock industries¹



Servicing
communities
across Australia



Emergency care
for hundreds of
thousands of wild
animals every year



Helping **protect**
Australia's
iconic species

¹ Meat and Livestock Australia State of the Industry Report 2022

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AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

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