



# **Act**

## on veterinarians and animal health services

### **Section I**

#### **General Provisions**

##### **Article 1**

This law applies to each and every veterinarian who is appointed, set or hired to work on behalf of the State and those veterinarians who work under permits in this regard that are issued under this law.

##### **Article 2**

Veterinarians shall stand watch over the health of animals in Iceland, promote their improved health, increased profitability of livestock and good living conditions for and treatment of animals. They shall be on guard against the suffering of damage by individuals or society as a whole because of animal diseases. In their work, they shall attempt to restrict dangers that could stem from sick animals and the consumption of spoiled livestock products, the import of living animals and livestock products, tools or things that could carry contaminants.

### **SECTION II**

#### **Supervision**

##### **Article 3**

The Minister of Agriculture supervises matters pertaining to this act.

##### **Article 4**

The Minister of Agriculture appoints a Veterinarians Council, consisting of four veterinarians, sitting for a five-year term, and the Chief Veterinary Officer is a consultant. One veterinarian shall be nominated by the Farmers' Association of Iceland, another by the board of directors of the Veterinarian Association of Iceland, a third by the board of directors of the Institute of Experimental Pathology at Keldur, and a fourth without nomination who shall also be the chairman of the council. Reserve members shall be nominated in the same fashion.

The council shall always deal with the import of livestock and, if requested, its genetic material. The council shall also deal with the import of other animals, livestock products and other factors related to animal health matters and animal products when requested to do so by the minister or Chief Veterinary Officer. The council may, if circumstances require, call on specialists for advice.

The same parties as those listed in paragraph 2 can refer disputed matters concerning veterinary services to the council. In resolving these disputes, the minister

shall call a lawyer qualified for appointment as a district court judge to work with the council.

The council shall maintain a book of minutes on their work.

#### **Article 5**

The Chief Veterinary Officer advises the minister and Government on all things regarding animal health matters and hygiene in the manufacture and handling of livestock products. The Assistant Chief Veterinary Officer, who is chosen from a group of veterinarian specialists, shall assist the Chief Veterinary Officer and be his stand-in.

The responsibilities of the Chief Veterinary Officer are:

- a. management and monitoring of the work of district veterinarians, veterinarian specialists and other veterinarians having permits to work as veterinarians,
- b. superintendence of all things regarding animal health affairs; he shall also collect information on the health status of animals and the healthfulness of animal products in other countries as necessity requires,
- c. superintendence of animal disease prevention, preventive measures, training regarding livestock diseases, the import and export of live animals, genetic material and livestock products and monitoring of the healthfulness of animal feed in co-operation with the Feed, Seed and Fertiliser Inspectorate.
- d. superintendence of the health of slaughter animals, health control in slaughterhouses and milk production in addition to superintendence of the health of other livestock and its products,
- e. organisation, collection of data and report preparation regarding animal diseases, health inspection of slaughter products and health control of milk production; he sees to the annual publication of health reports.

### **SECTION III**

#### **Rights and obligations**

#### **Article 6**

Under this law, only those having completed a university degree at a school of veterinary medicine recognised by the government of Iceland are considered to be veterinarians.

In Iceland, the only ones permitted to practice veterinary medicine are those having a permit from the Minister of Agriculture according provisions the minister sets in regulations after having obtained the Chief Veterinary Officer's pronouncement.

The Minister of Agriculture issues letters of permit to veterinarians to practice veterinary medicine, and veterinarians sign an oath in this regard. The Chief

Veterinary Officer maintains a register of veterinarians having permits to practice veterinary medicine.

A veterinarian has a duty to notify the Chief Veterinary Officer of:

1. when he plans to begin veterinarian work and where his practice will be located,
2. relocation of his residence,
3. his retirement from veterinary medicine.

Veterinarians beginning work in Iceland must acquaint themselves with Icelandic laws and regulations on veterinary medicine, and those working for the government shall have a command of the Icelandic language.

During the latter part of their curriculum, students of veterinary medicine may be entrusted to perform veterinarian work temporarily under the supervision of a veterinarian if the Chief Veterinary Officer recommends this.

#### **Article 7**

Only those veterinarians having a permit to practice veterinary medicine may perform medical procedures on animals. However, minor procedures and drug treatment in consultation with a veterinarian are exempted from the foregoing requirement.

#### **Article 8**

A veterinarian may only give or prescribe prescription drugs for an animal after he has diagnosed the disease.

#### **Article 9**

A veterinarian has an obligation to do his work with vigilance and fidelity and to maintain his knowledge. A veterinarian is responsible for the diagnosing of diseases and treatment of his sick animals.

Insofar as possible, a veterinarian must inform the owner or caretaker of an animal he receives for treatment of its condition, treatment and prospects as well as the expected cost of handling and medication if this is requested. He shall also inform the owner or caretaker of the possible risks associated with a particular procedure, common side effects of the drugs used and drug contamination of products.

A veterinarian has an obligation, if he is sought, or he is nearby, and the veterinarian on call is not reached, to provide the first necessary medical assistance in instances of sudden disease or accident unless prevented from doing so for an extremely serious, legally valid reason.

Veterinarians practising general veterinary medicine have a right and an obligation to participate in a watch arrangement organised in a relevant watch area, cf. Article 12, unless they are ill or prevented from doing so by more pressing official duties. A veterinarian may make an agreement with another veterinarian to take over his watch duties.

If a veterinarian becomes aware of or suspects that a serious contagious disease has infected animals in his work area, he shall take the necessary emergency measures to confirm his suspicion, curb the spread of the disease and prevent possible damage

resulting from it. He shall immediately notify the Chief Veterinary Officer of the disease, and they shall in consultation take the necessary measures.

A veterinarian must make an annual report on his veterinary practice and send it to the Chief Veterinary Officer. The Chief Veterinary Officer sets rules on what information the reports shall contain.

A veterinarian must exhibit meticulousness in the issuance of certificates and medical declarations. He has a duty of confidentiality concerning the information he acquires in his work, and with which he is entrusted, which does not concern public health.

A veterinarian may only advertise his veterinary practice with substantive and plain advertisements.

#### **Article 10**

A veterinarian may call himself a specialist and work as one in Iceland if he has obtained a permit from the Minister of Agriculture or has been accredited to work as a specialist in a country that is a member of the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

Applications for a specialist's permit shall be submitted to the Veterinary Council for comment when education is acquired outside the European Economic Area. In processing particular applications, a veterinarian specialised in the area for which recognition is sought may be called upon.

## **SECTION IV**

### **Organisation of district veterinary districts**

#### **Article 11**

The district veterinary districts are as specified below:

1. *Gullbringa- and Kjós District*: Reykjavik, Seltjarnarnes, Kópavogur, Gardabær, Hafnarfjörður, Mosfellsbær, Gullbringa- and Kjós District.
2. *Borgarfjörður and Mýri District*: Borgarfjörður District, Mýri District, Akranes, Borg Settlement.
3. *Snæfell Peninsula District*: Stykkishólmur, Snæfellbaer, Eyrarsveit, Helgafellssveit, Hnappadalur District, Flatey and farms in old Flatey Parish, Skógarströnd Parish.
4. *Dalar District*: Dalabyggd, Saurbaer Parish, East-Bardarströnd District with the exception of Flatey and farms in the old Flatey Parish.
5. *West Fjörds District*: West- Bardarströnd District, Ísafjörður, Bolungarvík, West- and North-Ísafjörður District, Strandir District and Baer Parish.
6. *West-Húnathing District*: West-Húnavatn District, Baer Parish in Strandir District.

7. *East-Húnathing District*: Blönduós, East-Húnavatn District.
8. *Skagafjörður and Eyjafjörður District*: Akureyri, Ólafjörður, Dalvík, Siglufjörður, Saudárkrókur, Skagafjörður and the Eyjafjörður Districts, Svalbardsströnd-, Grytubakki- and Háls Parishes in the South-Thingey District.
9. *Thingey District*: Húsavík, South-Thingey District with the exception of Svalbardsströnd-, Grytubakki- and Háls Parishes, North-Thingey District.
10. *East-Iceland District (North)*: Egilsstaðir and surrounding area, Eskifjörður, Mjóifjörður, Neskaupsstaður, Reydarfjörður, Seydisfjörður, North-Múli District.
11. *East-Iceland District (South)*: Fáskrúdsfjörður Parish, Búdir Parish, Stöð Parish, Breidadalur Parish, Djúpavogur Parish.
12. *East Skaftafell District*: Hornafjörður Town, East Skaftafell District
13. *West Skaftafell District*: West Skaftafell District with the exception of Mýrdalur Parish.
14. *South Iceland District*: Árnes- and Rangárvellir Districts, Mýrdalur Parish.

One district veterinarian shall be appointed in each district with the exception of the West Fjörds District, the Thingey Districts and the East Iceland District (North). In each of these districts, two district veterinarians shall be appointed.

Veterinarians in each district shall monitor slaughter animals, slaughter products, and product centres, the healthfulness, care, living conditions and facilities of cattle on farms where milk is produced for sale. They are also responsible for the performance of disinfection procedures. They must also monitor livestock and other animals as required by law. Insofar as possible, the control work of veterinarians and general veterinary services shall be kept separate.

District veterinarians in Gullbringa and Kjós, Skagafjörður and Eyjarfjörður and South-Iceland Districts tend exclusively to control work, but district veterinarians in other veterinary districts also see to general veterinary services as well as control work in the district, including watch services.

If necessary, veterinarians may be hired to assist in control and disease prevention in individual districts.

The Chief Veterinary Officer sets letters of instructions for veterinarians, which the Minister of Agriculture confirms. These letters shall stipulate conduct in office, duties, control work and authority for other veterinary work.

A fee amounting to cost shall be collected for control and inspections according to rules set by the minister after obtaining the Chief Veterinary Officer's proposals.

The Ministry of Agriculture shall provide district veterinarians with office facilities in accord with the scope of their work.

### **Article 12**

The veterinarian watch areas are as follows:

1. Gullbringa- and Kjós District
2. Borgarfjörður and Mýri District
3. Snaefell Peninsula District
4. Dalar District
5. West Fjörds District
6. East and West-Húnathing Districts
7. Skagafjörður and Siglufjörður
8. Eyjafjörður, Dalvík and Ólafjörður
9. Thingey District
10. East-Iceland District (North)
11. East-Iceland District (South)
12. East Skaftafell District
13. West Skaftafell District
14. Rangárvellir District and Mýrdalur Parish
15. Árnes District

District veterinarians shall organise watches in consultation with the working veterinarians in the watch areas, such that a veterinarian is always on watch, and it is easy to find out which veterinarian is on duty at any time. A watch in the same watch area may be divided between more than one veterinarian at the same time.

The organisation of watches is intended to take into account driving distances and the scope of services within respective watch areas.

If a dispute arises about the organisation of watches within watch areas, the matter shall be referred to the Chief Veterinary Officer for a ruling.

Payment for watch services is made according to an agreement between the Icelandic Veterinary Association and the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance.

### **Article 13**

To ensure regular and emergency services to settlements farther away from the residence of a veterinarian, the Minister of Agriculture, in consultation with the Chief Veterinary Officer, the Icelandic Veterinary Association and the Farmers' Association of Iceland, shall set rules on payment of part of the veterinarian's travel costs.

## **SECTION V**

### **Veterinary specialists**

#### **Article 14**

Veterinary specialists shall be hired, one for each of the following specialist fields: poultry diseases, fish diseases, horse diseases, cattle and sheep diseases, udder diseases, fur-bearing animal diseases and swine diseases. In addition, a veterinarian with expertise in the public health control of slaughter animals shall be hired, and a veterinarian to monitor the import and export of livestock products. Veterinary

specialists work under the direction of Chief Veterinary Officer who issues them letters of instruction.

Veterinary specialists, each in their own area, shall, in consultation with district veterinarians, work toward the improved health of livestock and disease prevention with specialised procedures, general training, instructions and preventive efforts. Veterinary specialists may be delegated other projects, provided that such projects appear in the letters of instruction. A veterinary specialist may not practice general veterinary medicine in their field of speciality.

Veterinary specialists shall have the initiative in implementing necessary testing and sample taking in co-operation with district veterinarians, laboratories and product centres and monitor the performance of disinfection measures.

#### **Article 15**

The Chief Veterinary Officer shall have access to acceptable facilities, equipment and expertise for diagnosing animal diseases for disease prevention and preventive work.

#### **Article 16**

The minister appoints the Chief Veterinary Officer, Assistant Chief Veterinary Officer and district veterinarians for five-year terms and issues them letters of instruction. A wage committee decides their wages and other terms of employment. Veterinary specialists shall be hired according to the provisions of Act no. 70/1996 on the rights and duties of government employees.

## **SECTION VI**

### **Sanctions, entry into force, etc.**

#### **Article 17**

The Minister of Agriculture sets more detailed provisions on the implementation of this law with regulations.

#### **Article 18**

If the Chief Veterinary Officer becomes aware that a veterinarian with a permit to practise veterinary medicine neglects his duties and work, exceeds his purview or seriously violates the dictates under which veterinarians must work, the Chief Veterinary Officer has a duty to admonish him to mend his ways.

In the event that a reiterated admonishment has no effect, or incompetence in medical work is involved, the Chief Veterinary Officer has a duty to report the matter to the minister. The minister can then rule that the involved party's permit to practise shall be temporarily suspended or permanently revoked.

If a veterinarian with a license to practise no longer fulfils the license requirements at the time of issue, for example, because of a mental or physical breakdown or substance abuse, the Chief Veterinary Officer has a duty to report the matter to the minister. The minister shall seek the opinion of the Veterinarians'

Council on such matters. The relevant veterinarian's permit to practise may be revoked if the Veterinarians' Council so recommends.

#### Article 19

Violations of this law and regulations and instructions issued under it are subject to fines or imprisonment if the culpability is great. Trials because of violations shall be conducted under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

#### Article 20

This law enters into force 1 January 1999. As of the same time, Act no. 77 of 1 October 1981 on veterinarians, along with subsequent amendments, is revoked.

### Temporary provisions

#### I.

While no agreements have been reached between the Icelandic Veterinary Association and the Ministry of Finance on continuing education, the following provisions apply: for every ten years that a district veterinarian has performed services, he has a right to a six months' sabbatical from work at full pay for postgraduate study in consultation with the Chief Veterinary Officer. The State Treasury pays the cost of tickets to the country in which the veterinarian plans to reside and the return to Iceland at the conclusion of his residence.

#### II.

If a job is eliminated, a veterinarian appointed or hired for service to the State before this law's entry into force has a right to severance pay in accordance with Article 34 of Act no. 70/1996.

---

*Approved in the Althingi 4 June 1998.*

(sign.) Ólafur G. Einarsson

PLACE AND DATE: *Reykjavik, 23 FEB. 1999*  
TRANSLATED BY: ELLEN INGVAÐÓTTIR  
AUTHORIZED TRANSLATOR  
AND  
COURT INTERPRETER *Ellen Ingvald*

Helgi Bernódusson