

129

Establishing Veterinary Professional Associates

Placed on the ballot by citizen initiative • Passes with a majority vote

Proposition 129 proposes amending the Colorado statutes to:

- create the state-regulated profession of veterinary professional associate in the field of veterinary care; and
- outline the minimum education and qualifications required to become a veterinary professional associate.

What Your Vote Means

YES A “yes” vote on Proposition 129 establishes the new regulated profession of veterinary professional associate as a provider of veterinary care, alongside veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technician specialists.

NO A “no” vote on Proposition 129 allows only veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technician specialists to be regulated providers of veterinary care in Colorado.

Summary and Analysis of Proposition 129

Who can provide veterinary care in Colorado?

Under current law, a licensed veterinarian, a registered veterinary technician (vet tech), a registered veterinary technician specialist (vet tech specialist), and other qualified personnel may provide veterinary care in Colorado. Current law establishes the scope of work for veterinarians and specifies some of the tasks that a veterinarian can delegate to vet techs, vet tech specialists or other qualified individuals. The Colorado State Board of Veterinary Medicine (state board) regulates these three licensed and registered professions, and creates rules for the practice and supervision of veterinary care, professional and academic qualifications, continuing education requirements, and disciplinary measures.

What is a veterinary professional associate?

Proposition 129 creates and adds the new regulated profession of veterinary professional associate in Colorado’s field of veterinary care. At a minimum, a qualified veterinary professional associate must receive a master’s degree in veterinary clinical care, or an equivalent degree determined by the state board. The state board may also adopt additional credentials or testing requirements to become a veterinary professional associate in the state. Similar to a vet tech or vet tech specialist, this new professional may perform tasks that are within their advanced education and training, while under the supervision of a veterinarian. The state board may determine the specific tasks and level of supervision required.

Table 1 describes the educational requirements and scope of practice limitations for current and proposed veterinary professions in Colorado.

Table 1
Veterinary Professions in Colorado Under Current Law and Proposition 129

	Veterinary Technician (current law)	Veterinary Technician Specialist (current law)	Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (current law)	Veterinary Professional Associate (under Proposition 129)
Degree Requirements	Either an associate's or bachelor's degree in veterinary technology.	Either an associate's or bachelor's degree in veterinary technology, and three to five years of clinical experience and training.	Advanced doctorate degree and clinical experience.	Master's degree in veterinary clinical care. Additional qualifications and training may be determined by the state board.
Scope of Practice	Provides support to licensed veterinarians, including performing dental procedures, advanced nursing care, animal health education, and treating minor medical conditions.	Performs the same tasks as a veterinary technician, as well as specialized support including emergency medicine and surgical assistance.	Performs all levels of care including diagnosis, prognosis, prescribing medications, and conducting surgery. Responsible for the supervision of all veterinary care.	May perform tasks that are within the individual's advanced education and training. Full scope of practice may be determined by the state board.

For information on those issue committees that support or oppose the measures on the ballot at the November 5, 2024, election, go to the Colorado Secretary of State's elections center web site hyperlink for ballot and initiative information:

<https://coloradosos.gov/pubs/elections/Initiatives/InitiativesHome.html>

Argument For Proposition 129

- 1) Many Coloradans struggle to get veterinary care for their animals, especially in rural and agricultural communities. Allowing new veterinary providers to practice under state law may create more training and career opportunities for veterinary professionals, leading to expanded access. Veterinary professional associates could provide needed relief to overworked veterinarians, allowing them to delegate additional tasks and take better care of animals in Colorado.

Argument Against Proposition 129

- 1) The measure's education and training requirements are vague and do not differentiate veterinary professional associates from existing veterinary care professionals. There are currently no academic programs for this profession in Colorado, so it is unclear when anyone would be eligible to work as a veterinary professional associate. Creating a new and untested profession could increase risk for animals.

Fiscal Impact of Proposition 129

State revenue and spending. Workload for the state board will increase to adopt rules, but spending for this effort is expected to be minimal. Once a population of veterinary professional associates exists, state spending will increase for oversight and enforcement of the new profession, and state revenue will increase in equal amounts from registration fees charged to associates.