

Initiative 145: Establishing Veterinary Professional Associates

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

1 **Initiative 145 proposes amending the Colorado statutes to:**

- 2 • create the state-regulated profession of veterinary professional associate (VPA) in
3 the field of veterinary medicine; and
4 • outline the minimum education and qualifications required to become a VPA.

5 **What Your Vote Means**

6 **YES**

7 A “yes” vote on Initiative 145 establishes
8 the new role of Veterinary Professional
9 Associate (VPA) as a mid-level provider of
10 veterinary care.

11 **NO**

12 A “no” vote on Initiative 145 maintains the
13 current system allowing only licensed
14 veterinarians and registered veterinary
15 technicians to provide veterinary care.

16 **Summary and Analysis of Initiative 145**

17 **Who can provide veterinary care in Colorado and how does Initiative 145 change this?**

18 Under current law, licensed veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, and registered
19 veterinary technician specialists may provide veterinary care in Colorado. These professionals
20 are regulated by the Colorado State Board of Veterinary Medicine (board). The board creates
21 rules for the practice and supervision of veterinary care, including rules for professional
22 qualifications, continuing education, and disciplinary measures. Additional federal
23 regulations apply to some types of veterinary care, such as prescribing medicine.

24 Initiative 145 creates the new role of veterinary professional associate, a mid-level role with a
25 scope of practice between a veterinarian and a veterinary technician. This profession would
26 also be regulated by the board. Table 1 describes the differences between each profession.

1
2

Table 1
Veterinary Professions in Colorado and Under Initiative 145

	Veterinary Technician and Veterinary Technician Specialist	Veterinary Professional Associate	Veterinarian
Degree Requirements	Two- or four-year degree from an accredited program, and a period of clinical experience	Master’s degree in veterinary clinical care, or equivalent degree.	Advanced doctorate degree and clinical experience from an accredited university
Supervision Requirements	Must be supervised by a licensed veterinarian	Must be supervised by a licensed veterinarian	None
Scope of Practice	A veterinary technician provides support to licensed veterinarians through medication administration, surgical assistance, and other tasks. A veterinary technician specialist provides specialized care, such as dentistry or radiology, with additional education and training.	A veterinary professional associate can perform all the duties and actions of a veterinary technician, and may be authorized to provide more advanced services such as diagnosis, prescribing medication, and surgery.	May perform all levels of care including diagnosis, initiating care, prescribing medications, and conducting surgery. Responsible for the oversight of all veterinary care.
Number of Veterinary Professionals in Colorado ¹	4,320	0	5,879

3 ¹ Source: Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies.

4 **What training programs exist for VPAs?**

5 Currently, two universities outside Colorado offer master’s degree programs in veterinary
6 clinical care. At least one state university in Colorado has proposed offering a master’s
7 program in veterinary clinical care. Under the measure, the board will determine what
8 degree programs, clinical experience, final examinations, and other qualifications will be
9 necessary for VPA registration.

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>

Arguments For Initiative 145

- 1) Many Coloradans struggle to get veterinary care for their animals, especially in rural and agricultural communities. Introducing new providers of veterinary care may help the industry meet demand, expand access, and make care more affordable. The VPA role could provide needed relief to overworked veterinarians, allowing them to delegate tasks and take better care of animals in Colorado.
- 2) The measure creates new jobs with viable economic and social benefits to Colorado. It will support new academic programs in the state and create a career pathway with greater income potential in the veterinary field. This regulated career would attract skilled professionals to the state and allow them to provide valuable services.

Arguments Against Initiative 145

- 1) There are no existing academic programs in Colorado that can educate VPAs and there is no indication this measure will bring more professionals to the state to fill the need for veterinary care in the near future. Allowing new practitioners with less training to provide complex care may not help Coloradans get veterinary care and could harm their animals.
- 2) Current law allows veterinary technicians and veterinary technician specialists to provide a wide variety of veterinary care. Rather than creating a new position, Colorado could focus its efforts on developing existing veterinary technicians or encouraging more people to pursue this profession. Increasing the use of existing qualified veterinary technicians will provide greater access and higher quality veterinary care without a new regulated profession.

Fiscal Impact of Initiative 145

The fiscal impact will be included in the second draft.