



Agriculture

During the 2017 legislative session, the General Assembly considered measures to incentivize veterinarians to locate in rural areas, regulate industrial hemp, and promote young and beginning farmers.

Veterinary Education Loan Repayment

Obtaining a veterinarian medical degree can be expensive, leaving graduates from such programs with substantial student loan debts. *House Bill 17-1282* creates a five-member state veterinary education loan repayment council (council) in Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. The act charges the council with administering the Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Program (program) by use of funds from the Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Fund (fund), which is also created in the act. Through the program, the council provides veterinary education loan repayments from the fund to eligible veterinarians who have graduated from an accredited doctor of veterinary medicine school; currently live in Colorado or, at some point, have lived in Colorado for at least 3 years; and agree to practice veterinary medicine for up to 4 years in a rural area of the state that is experiencing a shortage of veterinarians that the council designates for participation in the program. To implement the program, the council enters into a contract with an eligible veterinarian and the rural area of the state in which the veterinarian will practice veterinary medicine. The act also transferred \$140,000 from the General Fund to implement the program.

Industrial Hemp

The Colorado Constitution requires that industrial hemp contain a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration of no more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis. THC is the psychoactive component of cannabis and THC-A is a biosynthetic precursor of THC. *Senate Bill 17-090* requires the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) to determine the level of THC in industrial hemp by measuring the combined concentration of THC and THC-A.

Senate Bill 17-109 requires the Commissioner of Agriculture to create a group to study the feasibility of including hemp products in animal feed. The group must include a hemp producer, a hemp processor, a legal expert, a person from an institution of higher education who has studied hemp policy, a veterinarian, a livestock producer, and any other person the commissioner determines would facilitate understanding the legal, practical, or business considerations. The group must make recommendations by December 31, 2017.

House Bill 17-1148 requires applicants for commercial industrial hemp cultivation registration provide the names of each officer, director, member, partner, or owner of 10 percent or more in the entity applying for registration. Applicants may be denied registration for up to three years if any individual or entity listed in the application was previously subject to discipline or if the individual or entity was previously listed by an entity that was subject to discipline. When a

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registration is suspended, revoked, or relinquished, a new application for registration may be denied for up to three years after the effective date of discipline.

Under the Colorado Farm Products Act (act), dealers of farm products are required to be licensed with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (department). Farm products are defined as unprocessed products of the soil, such as vegetables and fruit, livestock, milk, honey, and hay. The act requires that businesses purchasing and storing agricultural products be licensed and bonded by the Colorado Department of Agriculture. *House Bill 17-1197* excludes marijuana from the definition of farm products in the act, thereby exempting marijuana businesses from these licensing and bonding requirements. The production and distribution of marijuana is regulated by other state laws.

Beef Country of Origin Retail Placard

House Bill 17-1234, which was postponed indefinitely in House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee, would have required anyone selling meat at retail to the public to conspicuously display a placard next to the beef designating it as either "U.S.A. Beef" or "Imported," depending on where the animals were born, raised, and slaughtered. If imported, the placard would have been required to indicate the beef's country of origin. The Department of Public Health and Environment would have been required to adopt rules to enforce this provision.

Alternatives to Permanent Agricultural Water Rights Transfers

Under current law, the Colorado Water Conservation Board administers a pilot program to demonstrate the practice of fallowing irrigated agricultural land and temporarily leasing the associated water rights. Fallowing is the practice of leaving plowed agricultural land unseeded for one or more growing seasons. Under current law, the board

is allowed to approve up to 10 pilot projects and applications for pilot projects must be received by December 31, 2018. *House Bill 17-1219* makes changes to the program and allows the board to authorize up to 15 pilot projects. No more than five pilot projects may be located in any one of the four major river basins. Applications to sponsor a project must be received by December 31, 2023. All projects must be completed by 2034.

Young and Beginning Farmers Interim Study Committee

Legislative Council approved the formation of a committee to meet in the interim between the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions to study supporting young and beginning farmers. The committee is charged with studying how state and local policies can better assist aspiring farmers and ranchers in the early stages of their careers, while also helping to protect working landscapes, enhancing climate resiliency, meeting growing demands for local food, promoting innovation, and sustaining rural communities and economies. The committee is to examine the lack of land access for young and beginning farmers; increasing the availability of credit and financial training for beginning farmers; increasing business skill training for young farmers; and increasing access to technical and financial resources to improve farm conservation measures.