

**RESOLUTION 5—2017**  
**Regular Annual Session**

Submitted by—  
Board of Directors

**POLICY ON THE VETERINARIAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING APPROPRIATE SELECTION  
AND USE OF SERVICE, ASSISTANCE, AND THERAPY ANIMALS**

**RESOLVED**, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the policy on the policy on The Veterinarian's Role in Supporting Appropriate Selection and Use of Service, Assistance, and Therapy Animals as noted below.

**The Veterinarian's Role in Supporting Appropriate Selection and Use of Service, Assistance and Therapy Animals**

Service, assistance and therapy animals provide valuable help, support, and comfort for people. Once it has been determined that use of a service, assistance, or therapy animal is appropriate, veterinarians have the opportunity to assist their clients in selecting the right animal for the right task, see that the animal receives appropriate training for its intended role, and ensure that the health and welfare of that animal is protected.

The AVMA encourages veterinarians to be familiar with the legal status and protections accorded to service, assistance, and therapy animals and their owners, and should discourage inaccurate or misleading descriptions of these animals' roles (e.g., "emotional support animals" status should be supported by a statement of need from a licensed mental health professional). Veterinarians should actively seek opportunities to work collaboratively with their human health and other human service-provider colleagues in developing and supporting guidance for the appropriate use of animals for therapeutic purposes and to assist people with disabilities.

**Statement about the Resolution**

The AVMA has been actively researching the role of service, emotional support and therapy animals over the course of the last two years. This included the creation of the policies "Emotional Support Animals," "Animal Assisted interventions: Definition," and "Animal Assisted Interventions: Guidelines," as well as a draft white paper titled "Assistance Animals: Rights of Access and the Problem of Fraud."

Given recent concerns specifically about service animal fraud raised by individual members, members of AVMA entities, the proposed policy is expected to serve as a foundation for further educational and lobbying efforts to promote appropriate use of service, emotional support, and therapy animals and discourage misunderstandings or fraudulent activities in relation to these categories.

AVMA is currently developing educational materials and is also exploring other collaborative activities that may assist members, policy makers, businesses, and others in supporting the appropriate use of these animals. The attached whitepaper explains some of the complexities of the issue, and suggests some strategies that might be used to simultaneously promote the appropriate use of assistance animals and discourage fraudulent activities.

**Financial Impact:**

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #2	House of Delegates
<b>Recommend Approval</b>	X			
<b>Recommend Disapproval</b>				
<b>Recommend Referral to...</b>				
<b>No Recommendation</b>				
<b>Recommend Postpone Indefinitely</b>				

(use this space for additional narrative, if needed)