AVMA statement on the National Research Council report, “Workforce Needs in Veterinary Medicine”

(SCHAUMBURG, Illinois) May 30, 2012 – The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is pleased that the National Research Council of the National Academies has released its report, “Workforce Needs in Veterinary Medicine,” and appreciates the efforts of council members to advance critical discussions focusing on the current and future state of veterinary education, the veterinary workforce and the veterinary profession as a whole.

The report focuses on how the veterinary profession is meeting its public responsibilities and suggests ways in which it might adjust to the complex challenges facing society in the 21st Century. It approaches the issue from several perspectives, including the supply and demand of veterinarians across all disciplines, the demand for veterinary services, the status of veterinary education, and the role economics plays in veterinary education and the practice of veterinary medicine.

The report states that “the profession faces important challenges in maintaining the economic sustainability of veterinary practice and education, building its scholarly foundations, and evolving veterinary service to meet changing societal needs.”

“Veterinary medicine has never been stronger in terms of its impact on all of society, and that includes both animal and human health,” said AVMA President Dr. René A. Carlson. “As society has changed – and as our world population has grown –
veterinary medicine has been presented with challenges on a global scale, and this report highlights many of the issues that the AVMA and many other veterinary organizations have been addressing for some time now. The National Academies report underscores some of the challenges that we face and, perhaps more importantly, that we must work to address, in order to position veterinary medicine for an even stronger future.”

The AVMA’s Strategic Plan, which was most recently updated in 2011 after input from AVMA councils, committees, members, staff, and constituent and allied organizations, reflects many of the issues explored in the National Academies study. Specifically, three of the AVMA’s strategic goals focus on strengthening the economics of the veterinary profession, transforming veterinary medical education to meet the needs of a changing society, and advancing scientific research and discovery.

“We know that the veterinary profession needs to adapt if we are to meet the needs of society,” Dr. Carlson said. “The National Academies report reinforces many of the efforts that are already under way to ensure that veterinary medicine remains vital and relevant in a world reliant on medical experts from all fields and disciplines.”

The study was funded by the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Animal Hospital Association, Bayer Animal Health and the Burroughs Welcome Fund. The report is available at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13413.

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The AVMA, founded in 1863, is one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations in the world, with more than 82,500 member veterinarians worldwide engaged in a wide variety of professional activities and dedicated to the art and science of veterinary medicine.