



## **Position Statement: On the Cessation of Provincial Veterinary Services**

**Issued by:** The New Brunswick Equestrian Association (NBEA)

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### **Executive Summary**

The New Brunswick Equestrian Association (NBEA) formally denounces the Government of New Brunswick's (GNB) abrupt decision to terminate provincial veterinary field services (PVFS) for the equine and agricultural sectors. While the NBEA is not inherently opposed to the privatization of veterinary care, the proposed **nine-month timeline** is dangerously unrealistic. This transition, initiated without stakeholder consultation or a feasibility study, threatens the welfare of New Brunswick's horses, the safety of the food production industry, animal welfare, and the livelihoods of rural animal owners.

### **1. A Failure of Consultation and Due Diligence**

The NBEA is deeply concerned that this policy was developed in a vacuum. To date:

- **Stakeholders Ignored:** Representative organizations, farmers, and horse owners were not consulted to assess the current risks or the specific needs of rural regions.
- **Private Sector Overlooked:** Current private large animal practices were not surveyed to determine if they have the capacity, equipment, or desire to expand into unserved territories.
- **Vets Sidelined:** Provincial Veterinary Field Services (PVFS) vets—the very experts currently providing care—were not consulted on the feasibility of a transition.

### **2. The Impossible Timeline**

A transition of this magnitude requires a strategic **3-to-5-year plan**, not a 270-day countdown.

- **Structural Barriers:** It is unreasonable to expect current PVFS veterinarians — many of whom are older and nearing retirement or younger and burdened by student debt—to establish private practices within nine months.
- **Recruitment Crisis:** North America is facing a severe shortage of large- animal veterinarians. The GNB's plan relies on "imagined" private practices that cannot be staffed by a workforce that does not currently exist.

### 3. Threats to Animal Welfare and Public Safety

The cessation of service will create immediate "veterinary deserts," particularly north of the Fredericton/Moncton corridor.

- **Emergency Care:** Currently, most regions have no private emergency coverage. Without PVFS, animals will suffer. Emergency interventions, disease treatment, and routine health maintenance will be delayed or forgone.
- **Herd Health and Food Safety:** Provincial veterinary services play a critical role in herd health monitoring, disease surveillance, and inspection within the food animal production industry. A gap in these services creates direct risks to the safety of New Brunswick's food supply and the humane treatment of livestock.
- **Disease prevention:** The detection and containment of infectious diseases — including zoonotic diseases that can affect humans — depends on regular veterinary oversight. The loss of coordinated oversight and testing creates vulnerability and increases the risk of communicable disease outbreaks.

### 4. New Brunswick's Unique Geographic Reality

Unlike neighboring provinces with high-density livestock populations, New Brunswick's farms and stables are scattered. This geography makes private practice less economically viable in remote areas. The PVFS was designed specifically to bridge this gap, ensuring that **all** New Brunswickers have access to fair, pay-per-use care regardless of their postal code.

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### Our Formal Request

The NBEA calls upon the Government of New Brunswick to immediately **pause the transition** and commit to the following:

1. **Extend the transition period to a minimum of 3 to 5 years** to allow for responsible private sector growth.

2. **Conduct an immediate feasibility study** involving all stakeholders to map out service gaps.
3. **Implement a retention strategy** for current PVFS veterinarians to prevent an exodus of essential talent from our province.

"The health of our horses and the safety of our food chain cannot be gambled on a nine-month deadline. We demand a plan that prioritizes animal welfare over administrative haste."