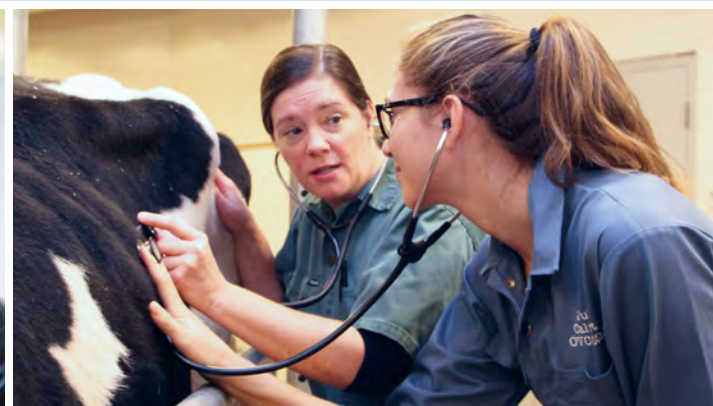




IMPROVE LIFE.

# Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance Impact Case Study

## Veterinary Capacity Program





## Strengthening Ontario's veterinary capacity

The University of Guelph's Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) has been a world leader in veterinary health care, teaching and research since 1862. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) leverages OVC expertise and invests in veterinary training through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance's Veterinary Capacity Program (VCP).

VCP is a well-established program that contributes to the development of Ontario's veterinary capacity. A greater societal interest in animal care has created a rising demand for veterinarians, in both companion and large animals. VCP provides students with the knowledge and skills required to meet the needs of the Ministry, the agri-food sector, and rural economic development.

Congruent with OMAFRA priorities, VCP ensures an ongoing supply of veterinarians who treat livestock for emerging issues; monitor the health of animals in the food chain; serve on the front line of disease surveillance in the rural and agricultural sector; and support farming communities and rural Ontario.

## The Veterinary Capacity Program provides all Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) students with:

- Experience and exposure to OMAFRA's priority species
- Knowledge of livestock production practices at the intersection of animal and human health as part of the One Health agenda
- Opportunities to develop practical competency through experiential learning and field experience
- Understanding of emerging animal health issues
- Awareness of veterinarians' roles in public health, public policy and regulatory standards



## Increasing veterinary training in Ontario

The Veterinary Capacity Program supports research and training at the Ontario Veterinary College. This investment helps develop the next generation of veterinarians who will support the province's livestock sector.

All numbers from 2020/21

### Inputs

**\$5.3M** from OMAFRA supports the people, places and programs that contribute to veterinary capacity in Ontario.

**32+** staff and interns

in OVC's Health Sciences Centre

#### OVC Externship course

provides the opportunity for students to work at a community veterinary practice

**15** doctoral students

who conduct research that supports Ontario's agricultural sector

**51** OVC faculty

who support teaching and research

#### Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses

supports public health research at the human-animal-environment interface





## By the numbers (2020/21)

Ontario's agricultural sector needs veterinary capacity to care for the health of many livestock and poultry.

Ontario livestock and poultry<sup>1</sup>



**1,585K** cattle



**253K** sheep



**3,678K** pigs



**234K** chickens

## OMAFRA investment leverages U of G excellence in veterinary sciences for Ontario

 **#1**  **#5**

U of G is ranked #1 in Canada and #5 globally in veterinary science (2021)<sup>2</sup>

**100%**

OVC graduate employment rate (2019)

**5,152**

licensed veterinarians in Ontario

**96%**

of OVC students passed the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam on the first attempt compared to 90% of the North American cohort



OVC graduates consistently outperform graduates of other veterinary schools on questions related to OMAFRA priority species

**3,381**

OVC graduates licensed in Ontario

<sup>1</sup> OMAFRA Livestock and Poultry Statistics 2020–July 2021

<sup>2</sup> 2021 ranking by Quacquarelli Symonds of veterinary science programs

## Making an impact

The following two examples showcase how the Veterinary Capacity Program is making an impact in Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities.

- 1 Externship Course:**  
Supporting rural communities through student-mentor connections
- 2 Ruminant Field Services Clinic:** On-farm training for Ontario's future veterinarians







# Externship Course

Supporting rural communities  
through student-mentor connections



“As demand grows for veterinarians, stagnant graduation rates and steep competition from urban areas have left many rural practices in a crunch.”

—Whelan, P. (2021, Sept. 15). [Creativity needed to address veterinarian shortage](#), *Canadian Cattlemen*

A growing Ontario population and a high demand for veterinary services have contributed to a veterinary capacity shortage in the province, particularly in northern and rural communities. This shortage creates barriers to livestock agriculture in regions that otherwise have potential for growth. Building connections between veterinary students and mentoring veterinary practices in these communities attracts graduates, which helps students make informed choices about their location for employment after graduation.

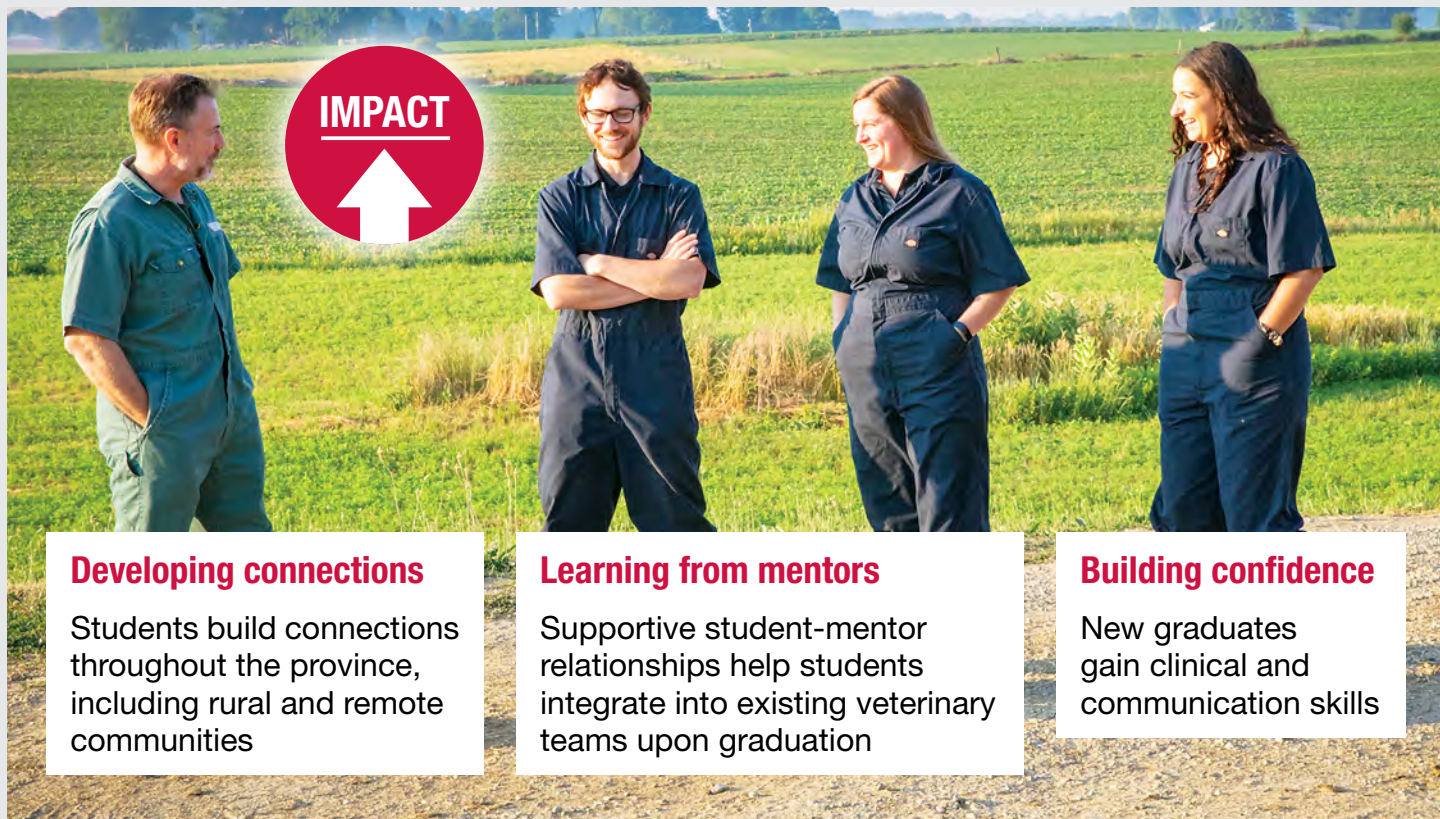
Supported by OMAFRA through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, VCP enables DVM students to participate in an eight-week externship course during fourth year in a veterinary practice focused on food animals, companion animals and/or horses. They are supervised and mentored by practicing veterinarians throughout their externship, establishing strong connections with the practice and community.

## 1

# Metrics and impact

## 4,500+

students have  
participated in the  
Externship Course  
since its inception



### Developing connections

Students build connections throughout the province, including rural and remote communities

### Learning from mentors

Supportive student-mentor relationships help students integrate into existing veterinary teams upon graduation

### Building confidence

New graduates gain clinical and communication skills

“OVC is able to provide a variety of learning environments and exposure to “real-life” herds. Inclusion of the eight week externship course allows students to experience life in [a veterinary] practice as part of a team and allows those practices to engage with the up-and-coming graduates who may be looking for employment.”

—Dr. Kelly Barratt, veterinarian/owner, Heartland Vet Services

“They [the students] introduce new ideas and come up with tough questions which keep us on our toes. We enjoy working as a team with the students and it is rewarding to see how their surgery skills and diagnostics improve during the externship.”

—Dr. Connie Dancho, Temiskaming Veterinary Services





# Ruminant Field Services Clinic

On-farm training for Ontario's  
future veterinarians



“We have been clients of the RFS for over 50 years. The students and staff of the RFS are outstanding. They all show genuine concern and compassion for our animals while still treating our farm as a business. In a way, they are like extended family.”

—Tim May, operator, Mayhaven Farms

Through VCP, the Alliance supports a consistent pool of highly skilled veterinarians to serve Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities. The Ruminant Field Services (RFS) clinic enables students to combine academics and real-world skills through working with faculty, clinical veterinarians, and DVSc students on dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats.

RFS places small groups of fourth year DVM students with veterinarians who act as the primary veterinary service for local commercial farms and U of G-managed research centres. The RFS clinic also encourages first, second and third year students to participate in farm visits and expose them to the agriculture and food sector at an early stage in their studies.

One of the most valuable aspects of the RFS clinic is developing students' skills and knowledge about the culture and language of farming. Students not only develop their clinical skills but also their understanding of the business of animal agriculture.



## 2

## Metrics and impact

**27** farms

and 4 U of G-managed  
research centres  
benefit from RFS  
veterinarians

**30** 4th year  
students

per year on average  
participate in the RFS  
clinic

**2** DVSc positions

within ruminant health  
management are  
funded through the  
Veterinary Capacity  
Program

## IMPACT

**Early exposure**

First, second, and  
third year students  
can gain agri-food  
sector experience

**Farm language and culture**

Students develop the skills and knowledge  
to communicate with clients and  
understand their livelihood while caring for  
their animals

**Farmers benefit**

RFS acts as primary  
veterinarian provider  
for local commercial  
farmers

**Hands-on training**

Small groups means  
students have the  
chance to practice  
hands-on skills



**“We are proud to be a RFS client. It is  
extremely rewarding to know that our  
farm and family has played a role in  
giving future vets hands-on training.”**

—Tim May, operator, Mayhaven Farms

**“The RFS rotation was very beneficial in my training as the veterinarians made every  
opportunity for me to further my skills rather than re-emphasize skills that had already been  
established. Spending one-on-one time with professors and asking them about relevant issues,  
best management practices, and opinions on cases is invaluable to future practitioners.”**

—Rachel Budd, associate veterinarian, Oxford Bovine

The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance is a collaboration between the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the University of Guelph.

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