

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5621

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Ecology

**Title:** An act relating to animal therapy.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing animal massage.

**Sponsors:** By Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Rasmussen, Sheahan, Shin, Roach, Constantine, Patterson, Prentice, Thibaudeau and Kohl-Welles).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/22/01, 3/30/01 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Authorizes licensed massage practitioners to apply for endorsement as large or small animal massage practitioners.
- Authorizes the Washington State Board of Massage to adopt rules for endorsement of licensed massage practitioners as large or small animal massage practitioners.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives G. Chandler, Republican Co-Chair; Linville, Democratic Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Mielke, Republican Vice Chair; B. Chandler, Delvin, Dunshee, Grant, Hunt, Quall, Roach, Schoesler and Sump.

**Staff:** Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

**Background:**

The practice of veterinary medicine is defined in statute to include a variety of activities,

such as: diagnosing animal diseases, deformities, defects, wounds, or injuries; prescribing or administering drugs or treatments; performing operations, manipulations, or application of any apparatus for cure, amelioration, correction, or reduction of any animal disease, deformity, defect, wound, or injury. Education, training, and examination requirements for veterinarian licensing are specified in statutes and rules of the Veterinary Board of Governors (Veterinary Board). The Veterinary Board also administers certificate of registration programs for veterinary technicians and veterinary medication clerks, who work under the supervision of licensed veterinarians.

The Washington State Board of Massage (Massage Board) administers massage practitioner licensing and adopts rules regarding standards for educational programs, examination, and licensing. Licensing is required for performing or offering services incorporating terms or designations implying a massage technique or method. To qualify for licensing as a massage practitioner, a person must be at least 18 years old and have successfully completed: (1) a course of study in an approved massage program or approved apprenticeship program; and (2) an examination administered or approved by the Massage Board.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

A licensed massage practitioner may apply for an endorsement as a small or large animal massage practitioner. An "animal massage practitioner" is defined to mean a person licensed to practice massage therapy with additional training in animal therapy. Animal massage therapy does not include diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment of animal diseases, deformities, defects, wounds, or injuries.

To apply for the animal massage endorsement, a licensed massage practitioner must have completed 100 hours of training in either large or small animal massage. This training must include animal massage techniques, kinesiology, anatomy, physiology, first aid care, and proper handling techniques. The Washington State Board of Massage (Massage Board) may adopt rules for endorsement of licensed massage practitioners as small or large animal massage practitioners.

Licensed massage practitioners applying for the endorsement within one year of the effective date of the new endorsement authority may submit documentation of a minimum of 50 hours of training with up to 50 hours of practical experience or continuing education, or a combination of practical experience or continuing education, to fulfill the endorsement application requirements.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amendment allows licensed massage practitioners, within the first year of the endorsement authority, to submit documentation of specified training, practical

experience, or continuing education hours to satisfy the application requirement.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Massage therapy has the same benefits for animals as it does for people. Massage therapy may be used for race horses, show horses and dogs, assistance dogs, and domestic pets. Massage for horses is very important to the racing industry. The demand for this service is now being met by out-of-state providers. This bill resolves the problems identified last year in offering these services, recognizes the importance of the practice, standardizes education requirements, ensures quality through massage practitioner licensing, and defines animal massage to exclude diagnosis, treatment and prescription activities.

(Comments) This bill recognizes massage therapy is not veterinary medicine. The Board of Massage should be able to recognize through endorsements only those who through experience and training have provided or can provide the service in a competent manner.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** (In support) Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Lola Michelin and Diane Morrison, Washington Animal Massage Society; Mary Ann O'Connell, Washington Horseman's Benevolent and Protective Association; and Jim Halstrom, Northwest Racing, Emerald Downs.

(Comments) Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association.