

Alaska veterinarian board hears pleas for rural care

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Pamela Samash, front left, reads public testimony letters from members of outlying communities supporting veterinarian Eric Jayne during an Alaska Board of Veterinary Examiners Meeting in the Legislative Information Office conference room Friday morning, October 29, 2010.

Continuing clockwise from left are John Toumi, Margaret Eastman, David Hunt, Brenda Donohue, Teresa Beck, and Martin Buser. Eric Engman/News-Miner

FAIRBANKS — Residents from Nenana, Healy, Minto and a wilderness ranch west of Fairbanks pleaded with the Alaska Board of Veterinary Examiners on Friday to reinstate veterinarian Eric Jayne.

They said Jayne, who specialized in caring for animals in rural Alaska, left the state last year and relinquished his veterinary license rather than face persistent scrutiny of his practices.

Board chairman Dr. David Hunt said the panel welcomes Jayne to re-apply for his license.

Jayne said in an e-mail that he is “glad to be out of the crazy world of Alaska veterinary medicine” and hopes the veterinary board takes action to help rural Alaskans get services.

Jayne was under investigation last year for multiple allegations of negligence, prescriptive practice and standards of care, according to an affidavit signed by Dawn Bundick, an investigator with the Alaska Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing.

Details of the investigation never left the investigatory phase, according to Hunt, who said the veterinary board is unaware if the complaints against Jayne were substantiated.

Jayne and his supporters say the complaints came mainly from other veterinarians who felt Jayne’s low fees undercut their profits.

John Tousignant is a state worker who moonlights as a bison and horse rancher. He said his animals are dying of routine injuries and ailments because he can’t find reasonably priced veterinary care.

Tousignant said one veterinarian quoted him a fee of \$1,000 plus the cost of medical procedures and travel costs to come to his ranch, located about 120 air miles west of Fairbanks.

“I can’t get any decent help out there,” he said. “We’re losing animals due to lack of veterinary assistance. It almost seems to me it’s all about the money, the greed.”

Minto dog musher Rocky Riley said he has come to be the de facto veterinarian for friends and acquaintances due to the lack of services in the Bush.

“Everywhere I go in the villages, guys show me their dog problems,” Riley said. “I don’t know if I am allowed to do this or not, but I practice veterinary care on my own.”

Letters, including one written by well-known sled dog racer Joe Redington Jr., were read in support of Jayne.

“Dr. Jayne’s work was always professional and clean,” Redington wrote. “He provided services when none (were) available. No one else has come forward to fill in the gap.”

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