

# **A Report of Veterinarian Well-Being and Ill-Being during COVID-19**

**Canadian Veterinary Medical Association**

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# Objectives and Study Details

- Data collection began July 16, 2020 and ended August 31, 2020.
- There were a total of 13 respondents.
- Given the low number of respondents, data is only reporting on mean levels of responses, as well as qualitative responses.
- Veterinarians were made aware that a summary report of the main findings would be shared with CVMA leadership.

# Demands and Resources

## *Definitions*

**Job Demands:** Aspects of the work role that require sustained mental and/or physical effort. <sup>1</sup>

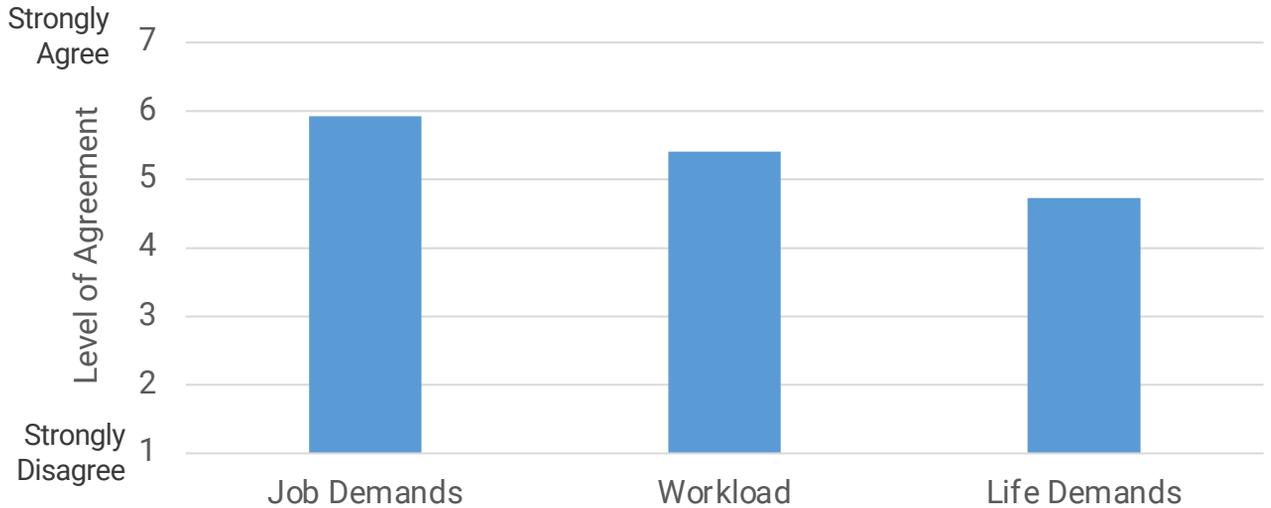
**Life Demands:** Aspects of the personal or home role that require sustained mental and/or physical effort. <sup>1</sup>

**Job Resources:** Aspects of the work role that help to manage demands, achieve goals, and/or stimulate personal growth. <sup>1</sup>

**Life Resources:** Aspects of the personal or home role that help to manage demands, achieve goals, and/or stimulate personal growth. <sup>1</sup>

# Demands and Resources

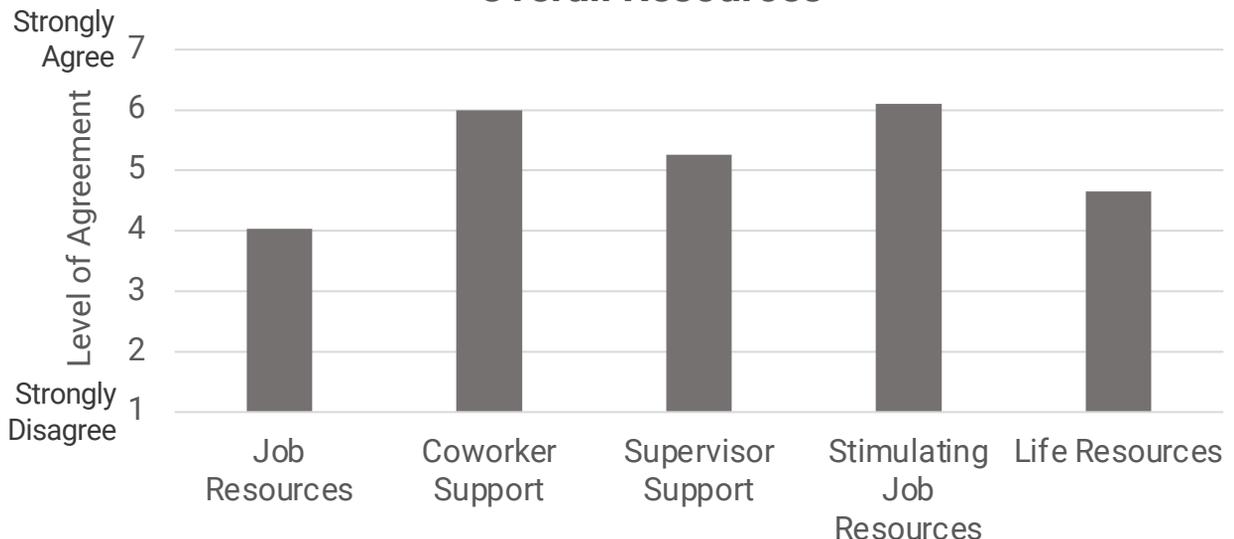
## Overall Demands



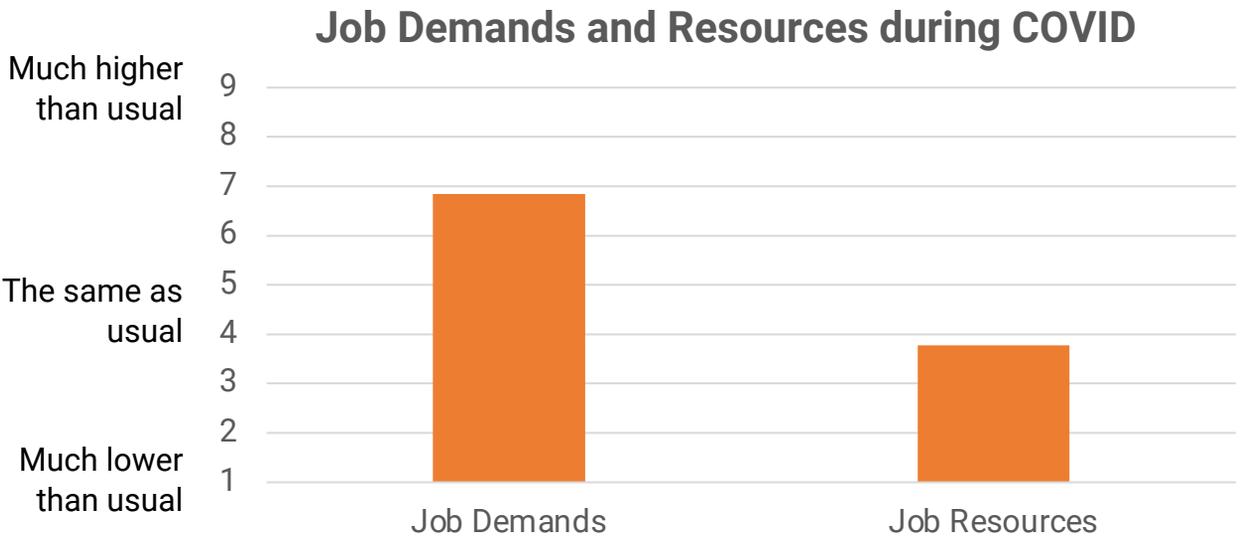
Veterinarians report high levels of general job demands, workload, as well as life demands.

In contrast, veterinarians report low general job resources, but high coworker support and stimulating job resources.

## Overall Resources

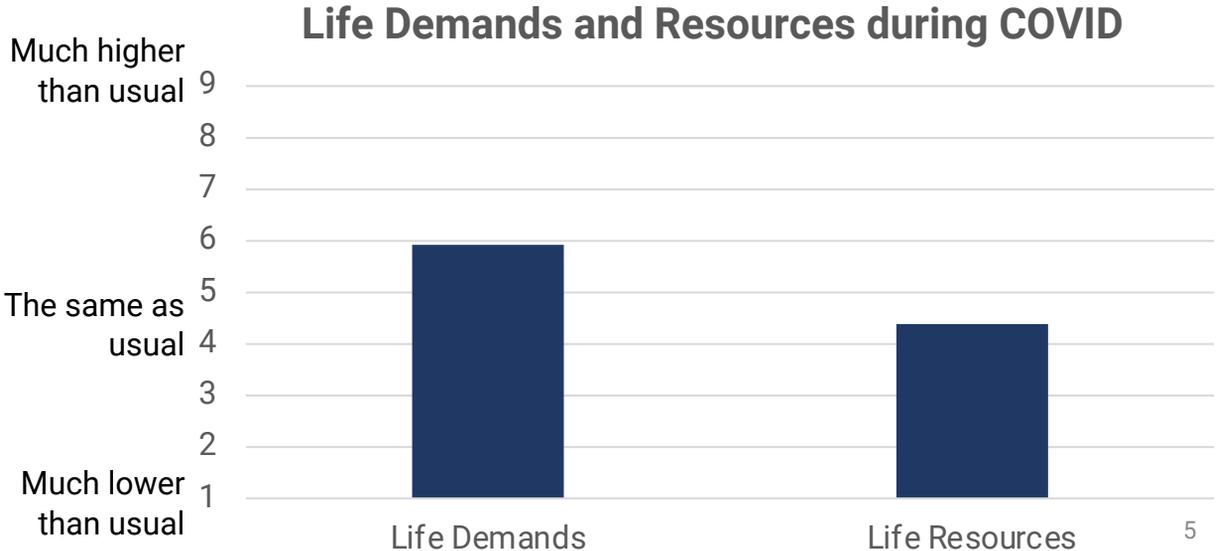


# Demands and Resources during COVID



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, veterinarians report that their job demands are somewhat higher than usual, while their job resources are slightly lower than usual.

Further, their life demands are slightly higher than usual, and their life resources are slightly lower than usual.



# Types of Job Demands and Resources Experienced

Veterinarians listed the following job demands most frequently as those that require ongoing emotional, mental, and physical effort, and the following job resources as those that help them in their work:

## Job Demands

- (1) Workload
- (2) Time (e.g., too much time pressure or insufficient time)
- (3) Clients (e.g., difficult interactions, too demanding)

## Job Resources

- (1) Helpful coworker and staff support
- (2) Sufficient or high-quality equipment
- (3) Access to knowledge resources (e.g., journals, books)

Veterinarians listed the following job demands most frequently as those that are particularly hindering/draining during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and the following job resources as those that are particularly helpful **during the pandemic**.

## Job Demands, COVID

- (1) Concerns regarding health and safety
- (2) Frequent interruptions at home
- (3) Telemedicine or virtual consults

## Job Resources, COVID

- (1) Supervisor support
- (2) Sufficient budget
- (3) Ability to work from home

# Types of Life Demands and Resources Experienced

Veterinarians listed the following life demands most frequently as those that require ongoing emotional, mental, and physical effort, and the following life resources as those that help them in their personal life:

## Life Demands

- (1) Personal health issues
- (2) Childcare
- (3) Eldercare

## Life Resources

- (1) Supportive spouse or partner(s)
- (2) Family (e.g., contact with extended family)
- (3) Supportive friends

Veterinarians listed the following life demands most frequently as those that are particularly hindering/draining during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and the following life resources as those that are particularly helpful **during the pandemic**.

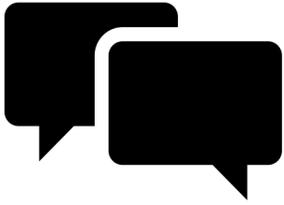
## Life Demands, COVID

- (1) Fear of getting sick
- (2) Increased home maintenance
- (3) Home chores

## Life Resources, COVID

- (1) Access to nature
- (2) Stable or reliable internet
- (3) Pets

# In Their Words



In general, veterinarians did not report on their helpful job resources, instead, they mentioned the job resources that they are lacking and that they wished they had more of.

“Not being able to communicate regularly with my coworkers - I get lonely.”

However, one veterinarian reported how they are a resource for their clients, by providing animal care to help maintain the bond between animals and humans.

“Being a veterinarian in a mostly small animal practice, maintaining the human animal bond by keeping pets well and healthy is a contributing factor in helping clients manage the stress associated with COVID-19.”

Veterinarians report that their job demands are just too high, especially given new issues stemming from the pandemic.

“Currently, the demands of my job are not compatible with good physical or mental health. The case load is unmanageable, I am working 30-40% more hours than normal per week, I am unable to accomplish my normal daily work tasks, and the duration of the pandemic work conditions is unknown. I feel that I have no control over my schedule and am unable to say no to clients...I feel frustrated and defeated on a daily basis, and there is never enough time in the day. I know that I am burning out.”

“Everything is just harder now - takes more rest and recovery time!”

“Work is more demanding and more stressful and some clinics are not seeing many of their clients and I am trying to help lots of people and feel exhausted.”

# Well-Being, Ill-Being, and Experiences of Work

## *Definitions*

**Job Involvement:** Identification with work, including the extent to which work satisfies one's needs and expectations.<sup>2</sup>

**Work Engagement:** A positive work-related state, characterized by: vigor, dedication, and absorption in work.<sup>3,4</sup>

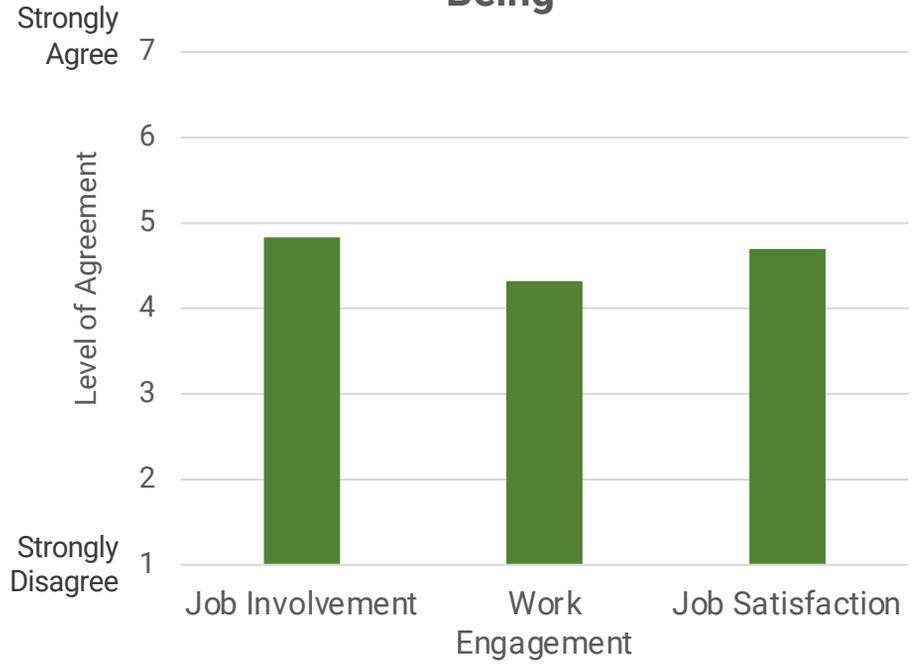
**Job Satisfaction:** Feelings of satisfaction towards one's overall job.<sup>5</sup>

**Strain:** Impaired psychological and physical functioning as an outcome of prolonged internal stress.<sup>5</sup>

**Burnout:** A negative work-related state that occurs as a result of prolonged stress, characterized by: depersonalization, reduced self-efficacy, and exhaustion.<sup>3</sup>

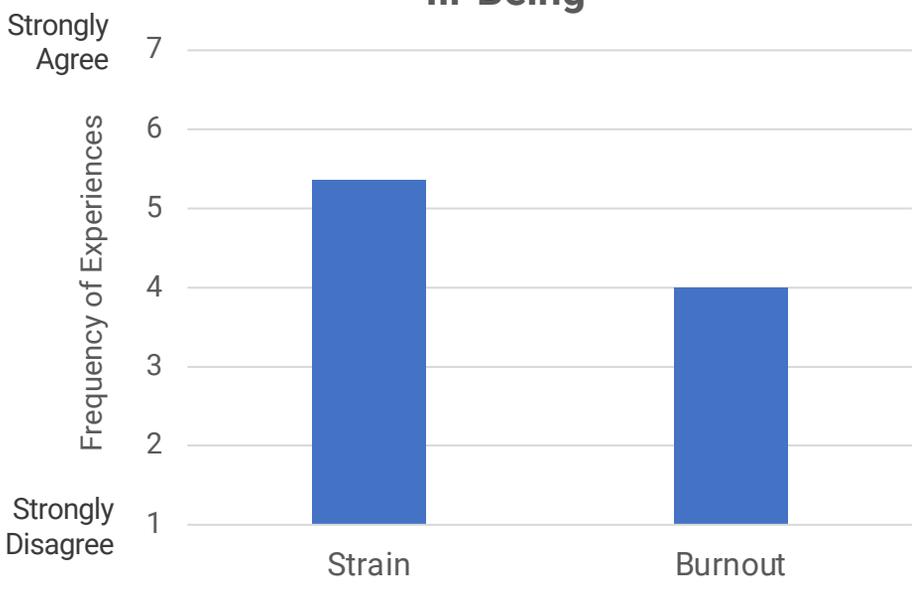
# Well-Being, Ill-Being, and Experiences of Work

## Experiences of Work and Well-Being



Overall, veterinarians reported feeling moderately to highly involved in their job, engaged in their work and satisfied with their jobs.

## Ill-Being



While veterinarians are reporting high levels of strain, they are reporting lower levels of burnout.

# In Their Words



Faculty expressed some positive experiences regarding their work, including positive interactions with clients.

“The department I am in...My tech and I and we get along very well and care about each other and our patients, so within the department I am very satisfied.”

“It helps when clients thank me, and I know they mean it. I feel I am helping someone in this crazy new world...Feeling valued makes me feel better about working so hard.”

“I still find veterinary medicine very rewarding, but always feel like I can’t keep up and often feel overwhelmed.”

“Being a veterinarian in a mostly small animal practice, maintaining the human animal bond by keeping pets well and healthy is a contributing factor in helping clients manage the stress associated with COVID-19.”

However, their experiences also reflect great difficulty. Veterinarians shared that they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted.

“My level of stress and frustration are increasing instead of getting better.”

“Too demanding - unable to provide the same quality of service as before.”

“I have a long list of tasks that I would like to complete but just can’t seem to find the time to complete. When I have some time, I am usually too exhausted to face these tasks.”

“At the beginning of COVID, I became the primary veterinarian at work in a busy, [multi-doctor] practice. Some days were a challenge to not feel incredibly overwhelmed. A full day of cases and after-hours call made for many long days.”

# Work-Life Interface

## *Definitions*

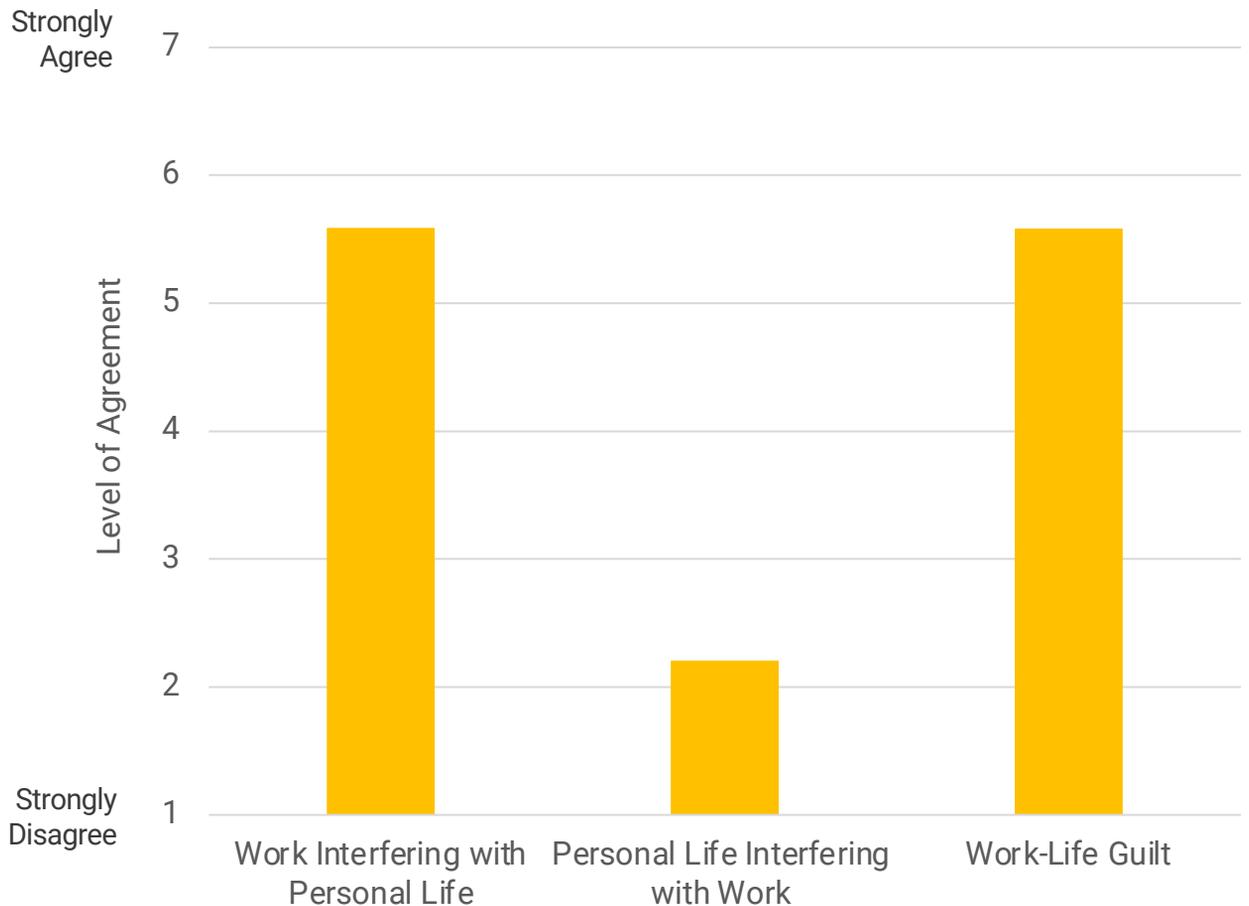
**Work-Life Interface:** When work and personal life intersect. Includes concepts such as work-life conflict and work-life balance.<sup>7</sup>

**Work Interfering with Personal Life Conflict:** Inter-role conflict that occurs when demands from one's work role obstruct one's personal life (e.g., childcare, other dependents).<sup>8</sup>

**Personal Life Interfering with Work Conflict:** Inter-role conflict that occurs when demands from one's personal life (e.g., childcare, other dependents) obstruct one's work role.<sup>8</sup>

**Work-Life Guilt:** A guilty feeling stemming from participating less in one's personal and family life than one wishes because of one's work role.<sup>9</sup>

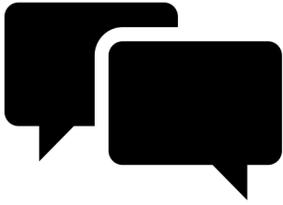
# Work-Life Interface



Overall, veterinarians report high levels of their work interfering with their personal life and comparably low levels of their personal life interfering with their work. This suggests that veterinarians' personal lives are much more permeable and susceptible to intrusions from work, rather than vice versa.

Perhaps as a result of the high level of work interfering with their personal life, veterinarians experience high levels of work-life guilt.

# In Their Words



A minority of veterinarians reported experiencing low levels of their work and personal life interfering with each other.

“My family is my priority - I do not let work interfere with the time with my family. Occasionally I have to attend a meeting in the evening and my other half will put the kids to bed, but that's it.”

Overwhelmingly, veterinarians shared that their long work hours and workload are having negative repercussions for their personal life.

“My work is all-consuming and I struggle to find quality time with my wife.”

“Work demand is so high it is leaving me completely exhausted for non-work life. I am lucky in that we were already functioning as a single income home, which has made the situation bearable.”

“I am often putting aside my family and friends needs because I am so exhausted from work. I have always prioritized my work-life balance, but that is no longer feasible.”

“Due to the additional time involved to communicate with clients over the phone vs. in person increases the time spent at work, at the detriment of homelife.”

“I am working 12 hours every other day. Initially, I was having to stay an extra 1-2 hours after close to get work done. On my days off, I was too exhausted from the previous day to do anything. I (finally) have access to work VPN, but that means I am doing 2-3 hours (or more) at home on my "days off". This is affecting my marriage - I am often tired, impatient, and "spent" from work.”

# Vets' Suggestions For How CVMA Can Improve Well-Being



## 1. Address the shortage of veterinarians

Increase number of veterinarians in Canada to share client load



## 2. Provide more recognition and acknowledgment

Formally acknowledge veterinarians' contributions, engage in initiatives to enable veterinarians to feel valued by federal and provincial governing bodies; recognize and act accordingly to the different groups of veterinarians (e.g., private practice, public service)



## 3. Promote balance between work and life

Encourage veterinarians to take time off and engage in self-care, help veterinarians find ways to cope with newfound pandemic stress in healthy ways



## 4. Continue to educate the public

Continue with public education regarding responsible pet ownership and its associated costs as a way to manage veterinarians' workload

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