

CHAPTER 61

Professional and Occupational Licenses

Art.

14. Veterinary Medicine, 61-14-1 to 61-14-20.

ARTICLE 14

Veterinary Medicine

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61-14-1 Short title. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

This act may be cited as the "Veterinary Practice Act".

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-12, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 1.

61-14-2 Definitions. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

As used in the Veterinary Practice Act:

A. "animal" means any animal other than man;

B. "practice of veterinary medicine" means:

(1) the diagnosis, treatment, correction, change, relief or prevention of animal disease, deformity, defect, injury or other physical or mental condition, including the prescription or administration of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique and the use of any procedure for artificial insemination, testing for pregnancy, diagnosing and treating sterility or infertility or rendering advice with regard to any of these;

(2) the representation, directly or indirectly, publicly or privately, of an ability and willingness to do any act mentioned in Paragraph (1) of this subsection; or

(3) the use of any title, words, abbreviation or letters in a manner or under circumstances that induce the belief that the person using them is qualified to do any act mentioned in Paragraph (1) of this subsection;

C. "veterinarian" means a person having the degree of doctor of veterinary medicine or its equivalent from a veterinary school or a person who has received a medical education in veterinary medicine in a foreign country and has thereafter entered the United States and fulfilled the requirements and standards set forth by the American veterinary medical association and has passed all examinations required by the board prior to being issued any license to practice veterinary medicine in this state;

D. "licensed veterinarian" means a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine in this state;

E. "veterinary school" means any veterinary college or any division of a university or college which is approved for accreditation by the American veterinary medical association;

F. "board" means board of veterinary medicine;

G. "veterinary technician" means a skilled person certified by the board as being qualified by academic and practical training to provide veterinary services under the supervision and direction of the licensed veterinarian who is responsible for the performance of that technician;

H. "committee" means the veterinary technician examining committee;

I. "direct supervision" means the treatment of animals on the direction, order or prescription of a licensed veterinarian who is available on the premises and who has established a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship;

J. "valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship" means:

(1) the veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of an animal being treated and the need for and the course of the animal's medical treatment;

(2) the client has agreed to follow the instructions of the veterinarian;

(3) the veterinarian is sufficiently acquainted with an animal being treated, whether through examination of the animal or timely visits to the animal's habitat for purposes of assessing the condition in which the animal is kept, to be capable of making a preliminary or general diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal being treated; and

(4) the veterinarian is reasonably available for follow-up treatment; and

K. "veterinary medicine" means veterinary surgery, obstetrics, dentistry and all other branches or specialties of veterinary medicine.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-13, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 2; 1975, ch. 96, § 1; 1977, ch. 236, § 1; 1993, ch. 163, § 1.

61-14-3 Criminal offender's character evaluation. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The provisions of the Criminal Offender Employment Act [28-2-1 to 28-2-6 NMSA 1978] shall govern any consideration of criminal records required or permitted by the Veterinary Practice Act.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-13.1, enacted by Laws 1974, ch. 78, § 19.

61-14-4 Board created; terms; compensation; finance. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. The "board of veterinary medicine" is created. The board shall consist of seven members who are citizens of the United States and residents of New Mexico. Veterinary members shall have been licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the state for five years preceding their appointment to the board.

B. Members of the board and their successors shall be appointed by the governor. Five of the members shall be licensed veterinarians, and these appointments may be made from a list of five names for each professional vacancy, submitted to the governor by the New Mexico veterinary medical association. Two members shall represent the public and shall not have been licensed as veterinarians or have any significant financial interest, whether direct or indirect, in the occupation regulated.

C. Members shall be appointed to staggered terms of four years each. Appointments shall be made in such manner that the terms of no more than two board members expire on July 1 of each year. All board members shall hold office until their successors are appointed and qualified. Appointments to vacancies shall be for the unexpired terms. Board members shall not serve more than two consecutive four-year terms.

D. A majority of the members of the board constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, except that the vote of four members is required for suspension or revocation of a license. The board shall elect a chairman and other necessary officers prescribed by regulation of the board.

E. Members of the board shall receive per diem and mileage as provided in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 through 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance. This reimbursement and all other expenses involved in carrying out the Veterinary Practice Act shall be paid exclusively from fees received pursuant to provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act. The board shall deposit all fees received pursuant to provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act with the state treasurer for the exclusive use of the board, and money shall be expended only upon vouchers certified by a majority of the board.

F. Any board member failing to attend, after proper notice, three consecutive meetings, either regular or special, shall automatically be removed as a member of the board.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-14, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 3; 1975, ch. 96, § 2; 1979, ch. 76, § 1; 1991, ch. 189, § 21; 1993, ch. 163, § 2; 1995, ch. 154, § 1.

61-14-4.1 Protected actions; communication. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. No current or former member of the board, officer, administrator, staff member, committee member, examiner, representative, agent, employee, consultant, witness or any other person serving or having served the board shall bear liability or be subject to civil damages or criminal prosecutions for any action or omission undertaken or performed within the scope of the board's duties.

B. All written and oral communications made by any person to the board relating to actual or potential disciplinary action shall be confidential communications and are not public records for the purposes of the Inspection of Public Records Act [Chapter 14, Article 2 NMSA 1978]. All data, communications and information acquired by the board relating to actual or potential disciplinary action shall not be disclosed except to the extent necessary to carry out the board's purposes or in a judicial appeal from the board's actions.

C. The board shall make available to interested members of the public information about a disciplinary action taken by the board pursuant to Section 61-14-13 NMSA 1978, including the name of the licensee, the nature of the violation of the Veterinary Practice Act and the disciplinary action taken.

D. No person or legal entity providing information to the board, whether as a report, a complaint or testimony, shall be subject to civil damages or criminal prosecutions.

History: Laws 1999, ch. 243, § 6.

61-14-5 Board; duties. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The board shall:

A. examine and determine the qualifications and fitness of applicants for a license to practice veterinary medicine in New Mexico and issue, renew, deny, suspend or revoke licenses;

B. regulate artificial insemination and pregnancy diagnosis by establishing standards of practice and issuing permits to persons found qualified;

C. establish a schedule of license and permit fees based on the board's financial requirements for the ensuing year;

D. conduct investigations necessary to determine violations of the Veterinary Practice Act and discipline persons found in violation;

E. employ personnel necessary to carry out its duties;

F. promulgate and enforce regulations necessary to establish recognized standards for the practice of veterinary medicine and to carry out the provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act. The board shall make available to interested members of the public copies of the Veterinary Practice Act and all regulations promulgated by the board;

G. examine applicants for veterinary technician certification purposes. Such examination shall be held at least once a year at the times and places designated by the board;

H. establish a five-member veterinary technician examining committee;

I. adopt regulations establishing continuing education requirements as a condition for license renewal; and

J. regulate the operation of veterinary facilities, including:

(1) establishing requirements for operation of a veterinary facility in accordance with recognized standards for the practice of veterinary medicine;

(2) issuing permits to qualified veterinary facilities; and

(3) adopting standards for inspection of veterinary facilities.

For purposes of this subsection, "veterinary facility" means any building, mobile unit, vehicle or other location where services included within the practice of veterinary medicine are provided.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-15, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 4; 1975, ch. 96, § 3; 1977, ch. 167, § 1; 1993, ch. 163, § 3; 1995, ch. 154, § 2; 1999, ch. 243, § 1.

61-14-5.1 Impaired veterinarian. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. The board may appoint an impaired-veterinarian committee to organize and administer a program that will:

(1) serve as a diversion program to which the board may refer licensees in lieu of or in addition to other disciplinary action under terms set by the board; and

(2) be a confidential source of treatment or referral for veterinarians who, on a voluntary basis and without the knowledge of the board, desire to avail themselves of treatment for emotionally based or chemical-dependence impairments.

- B. The impaired-veterinarian committee shall:
 - (1) provide evaluations for veterinarians who request participation in the diversion program;
 - (2) review and designate treatment facilities and services to which veterinarians in the diversion program may be referred;
 - (3) receive and review information concerning the status and progress of participants in the diversion program;
 - (4) publicize the diversion program in coordination with veterinary professional associations; and
 - (5) prepare and provide reports at least annually to the board.
- C. Each veterinarian referred to the diversion program by the board shall be informed of the procedures applicable to the diversion program, of the rights and responsibilities associated with participation in the diversion program and of the possible consequences of failure to participate in the diversion program. Failure to comply with any treatment requirement of the diversion program may result in termination of diversion program participation; termination of diversion program participation shall be reported to the board by the impaired-veterinarian committee. Participation in the diversion program shall not be a defense against, but may be considered in mitigating, any disciplinary action taken by the board. The board is not precluded from commencing a disciplinary action against a veterinarian who is participating in the diversion program or has been terminated.
- D. No member of the board or the impaired-veterinarian committee shall be liable for civil damages because of acts or omissions that occur in administering the provisions of this section.

History: Laws 1993, ch. 163, § 11.

61-14-6 Veterinary technician examining committee; membership; terms; compensation. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

- A. The "veterinary technician examining committee" shall consist of five members appointed by the board of veterinary medicine. The committee shall consist of two licensed veterinarians, one member of the board and two registered veterinary technicians.
- B. Committee members shall serve for terms of four years except the board member on the committee shall be appointed for one year. With the exception of the board member on the committee, the terms of committee members shall be staggered by one year. Committee members shall serve until their successors have been appointed and qualified. Any vacancy shall be filled by appointment by the board of veterinary medicine for the remainder of the unexpired term.
- C. Members of the committee shall receive per diem and mileage as provided in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 through 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-15.1, enacted by Laws 1975, ch. 96, § 4; 1993, ch. 163, § 4.

61-14-7 Duties of the veterinary technician examining committee. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

- A. The committee shall evaluate qualifications of education, skill and experience for certification of a person as a veterinary technician and provide forms and procedures for the board for certificates of qualification and for annual registration of employment.
- B. The committee shall assist the board in the examination of applicants for veterinary technician certification. Such examination shall be held at least once a year at the times and places designated by the board.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-15.2, enacted by Laws 1975, ch. 96, § 5.

61-14-8 Application for license. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

- A. Any person desiring a license to practice veterinary medicine in this state may make written application to the board showing that he:
 - (1) has reached the age of majority; and
 - (2) is a person of good moral character.

The application shall contain other information and proof as required by regulation of the board and shall be accompanied by an application fee established by the board.

B. If the board finds that the applicant possesses the proper qualifications, it shall admit him to the next examination. If an applicant is found unqualified to take the examination, the board shall immediately notify the applicant in writing of its findings and the grounds for them.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-16, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 5; 1973, ch. 49, § 1; 1993, ch. 163, § 5.

61-14-9 Examination. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The board shall conduct at least one examination each calendar year following public notice of the time and place. Examinations shall be prepared and conducted under regulations promulgated by the board, and shall be designed to test the applicant's knowledge and proficiency in the practice of veterinary medicine. Immediately after the results of each examination are determined, the board shall notify each applicant of the results of his examination and issue a license to those applicants successfully completing it. Any applicant failing an examination shall be admitted to any subsequent examination upon payment of another application fee.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-17, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 6.

61-14-10 License by endorsement. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. Pursuant to its regulations, the board may issue a license without written examination, except an examination on state laws and other state and federal regulations related to the practice of veterinary medicine, to any qualified applicant who furnishes satisfactory evidence that he is a veterinarian and has for the five years next prior to filing his application, been a practicing veterinarian and licensed in a state, territory or district of the United States having license requirements at the time the applicant was first licensed that were substantially equivalent to the requirements of the Veterinary Practice Act.

B. Pursuant to its regulations, the board may issue, with examination, a limited practice license in veterinary medicine, which limited practice license shall describe adequately that area of veterinary medicine that the licensee is entitled to practice.

C. At its discretion, the board may examine, orally or practically, any person qualifying for a license under this section.

D. The board may issue without examination a temporary permit to practice veterinary medicine to:

(1) a qualified applicant for a license pending examination, provided the applicant is a graduate veterinarian and employed by and working under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian provided:

(a) the temporary permit shall expire the day after the notice of results of the first examination given after the permit is issued;

(b) a qualified applicant for a license pending examination may, at the board's discretion, be exempted from the requirement of working under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, provided the applicant submits a written request for such exemption; and

(c) no additional temporary permit shall be issued to an applicant who has failed the required components of the New Mexico examination in this or any other state or any other territory, district or commonwealth of the United States; or

(2) a nonresident veterinarian validly licensed and in good standing with the licensing authority in another state, territory, district or commonwealth of the United States; provided that the temporary permit shall be issued for a period lasting no more than sixty days and that not more than one permit shall be issued to such a person during each calendar year. No more than two temporary permits shall be issued to any one individual.

E. A temporary permit to practice veterinary medicine may be summarily revoked by a majority vote of the board without a hearing.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-18, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 7; 1975, ch. 96, § 6; 1993, ch. 163, § 6; 1995, ch. 154, § 3.

61-14-11 Certification as veterinary technician; annual registration of employment; employment change; fees. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. No person shall perform or attempt to perform as a veterinary technician without first applying for and obtaining a certificate of qualification from the board of veterinary medicine as a veterinary technician and having his employment registered in accordance with board regulation.

B. A veterinary technician shall perform only those acts and duties assigned him by a supervising licensed veterinarian that are within the scope of practice of such supervising veterinarian, not to include diagnosis, prescription or surgery.

C. An applicant for a certificate of qualification as a veterinary technician shall complete application forms as supplied by the board of veterinary medicine, successfully complete an examination conducted by the board and pay a fee to defray the cost of processing the application and administering the examination, which fee is not returnable.

D. Each certified veterinary technician shall annually register his employment with the board of veterinary medicine, stating his name and current address, the name and office address of both his employer and supervising licensed veterinarian and such additional information as the board deems necessary. Upon any change of employment as a veterinary technician, such registration shall automatically be void. Each annual registration or registration of new employment shall be accompanied by fees set by the board for use by the board in defraying the cost of administering the Veterinary Practice Act.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-18.1, enacted by Laws 1975, ch. 96, § 7; 1993, ch. 163, § 7.

61-14-12 License, permit and registration renewal. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. All licenses, permits and registrations may be renewed by payment of the renewal fee and submission of proof of completion of continuing education requirements as established by regulation of the board. Not later than thirty days prior to expiration, the board shall mail a notice to each licensed veterinarian, registered veterinary technician and holder of an artificial insemination or pregnancy diagnosis permit that the license, registration or permit will expire and provide a renewal application form.

B. Except as provided in Subsections C and D of this section, any person may reinstate an expired license, registration or permit within five years of its expiration by making application to the board for renewal and paying the current renewal fee along with all delinquent renewal fees and late fees. After five years have elapsed since the date of expiration, a license, registration or permit may not be renewed and the holder shall apply for a new license, registration or permit and take the required examination.

C. A person shall not have his license reinstated in New Mexico if, during the time period his license to practice in New Mexico was lapsed, his license in another state or jurisdiction was suspended or revoked for reasons for which the license would have been subject to suspension or revocation in New Mexico.

D. A person who, during the time period his license to practice in New Mexico was lapsed, was subject to any disciplinary proceedings resulting in action less than suspension or revocation in another state or jurisdiction, may, at the discretion of the board, have his license to practice in New Mexico reinstated on a probationary status for up to two years. Upon request by the applicant for reinstatement, the board shall determine under what circumstances the probationary status shall be continued or removed or the application for reinstatement denied.

E. The board may provide by regulation for waiver of payment of any renewal fee of a licensed veterinarian during any period when he is on active duty with any branch of the armed services of the United States for the duration of a national emergency.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-19, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 8; 1975, ch. 96, § 8; 1977, ch. 167, § 2; 1993, ch. 163, § 8; 1995, ch. 154, § 4.

61-14-13 Denial, suspension or revocation of license. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

A. In accordance with the procedures contained in the Uniform Licensing Act [61-1-1 to 61-1-31 NMSA 1978], the board may deny, suspend for a definite period or revoke a license, certificate or permit held or applied for under the Veterinary Practice Act, or may reprimand, place on probation, enter a stipulation with or impose an administrative penalty in an amount not to exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000) on a holder of a license, certificate or permit, upon a finding by the board that the licensee, certificate or permit holder, or applicant:

- (1) has committed an act of fraud, misrepresentation or deception in obtaining a license or permit;
- (2) has been adjudicated insane or manifestly incapacitated;
- (3) has used advertising or solicitation that is false, misleading or is otherwise deemed unprofessional under rules promulgated by the board;
- (4) has been convicted of a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude;
- (5) is guilty of dishonesty, incompetence, gross negligence or other malpractice in the practice of veterinary medicine;

- (6) has a professional association with or employs any person practicing veterinary medicine unlawfully;
- (7) is guilty of fraud or dishonesty in the application or reporting of any test for disease in animals;
- (8) has failed to maintain his professional premises and equipment in a clean and sanitary condition in compliance with facility permit rules promulgated by the board;
- (9) is guilty of habitual or excessive use of intoxicants or drugs;
- (10) is guilty of cruelty to animals;
- (11) has had his license to practice veterinary medicine revoked by another state, territory or district of the United States on grounds other than nonpayment of license or permit fees;
- (12) is guilty of unprofessional conduct by violation of a rule promulgated by the board pursuant to provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act;
- (13) has failed to perform as a veterinary technician under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian;
- (14) has failed as a licensed veterinarian to reasonably exercise direct supervision with respect to a veterinary technician;
- (15) is guilty of aiding or abetting the practice of veterinary medicine by a person not licensed, certified or permitted by the board;
- (16) has used any controlled drug or substance on any animal for the purpose of illegally influencing the outcome of a competitive event;
- (17) has willfully or negligently administered a drug or substance that will adulterate meat, milk, poultry, fish or eggs;
- (18) has failed to maintain required logs and records;
- (19) has used a prescription or has sold any prescription drug or prescribed extra-label use of any over-the-counter drug in the absence of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship;
- (20) has failed to report, as required by law, or has made a false report of any contagious or infectious disease;
- (21) has engaged in an unfair or deceptive practice; or
- (22) has engaged in the practice of veterinary medicine on any animal or group of animals in the absence of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

B. Disciplinary proceedings may be instituted by sworn complaint by any person and shall conform with the provisions of the Uniform Licensing Act.

C. Any person whose license, certificate or permit is suspended or revoked by the board pursuant to provisions of this section may, at the discretion of the board, be relicensed or reinstated by the board at any time without examination upon written application to the board showing cause to justify relicensing or reinstatement.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-20, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 9; 1975, ch. 96, § 9; 1993, ch. 163, § 9; 1995, ch. 154, § 5; 1998, ch. 55, § 75; 1999, ch. 243, § 2.

61-14-14 Exemptions. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

Provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act do not apply to:

- A.** employees of federal, state or local governments performing official duties;
- B.** regular students in a veterinary school performing duties or actions assigned by an instructor or working under direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian during a school vacation period;
- C.** reciprocal aid of neighbors in performing routine accepted livestock management practices;
- D.** any veterinarian licensed in any foreign jurisdiction consulting with a licensed veterinarian;
- E.** any merchant or manufacturer selling at his regular place of business any medicine, feed, appliance or other product used in the prevention or treatment of animal disease;
- F.** the owner of an animal, his consignees and their employees while performing routine accepted livestock management practices in the care of animals belonging to the owner;
- G.** a member of the faculty of a veterinary school performing his regular functions or a person lecturing or giving instruction or demonstration at a veterinary school or in connection with a continuing education course or seminar for licensed veterinarians, veterinary technicians or persons holding or training for valid permits for artificial insemination or diagnosing pregnancy;
- H.** a person selling or applying any pesticide, insecticide or herbicide; or

I. a person engaging in bona fide scientific research that reasonably requires experimentation involving animals.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-21, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 10; 1975, ch. 96, § 10; 1993, ch. 163, § 10; 1999, ch. 243, § 3.

61-14-15 Persons previously licensed. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The board shall issue a license to any person holding a valid license to practice veterinary medicine in this state on the effective date of the Veterinary Practice Act.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-22, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 11.

61-14-16 Responsibility. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

Every veterinarian using, supervising or employing a registered veterinary technician shall be individually responsible and liable for the performance of the acts and omissions delegated to the veterinary technician. Nothing in this section shall be construed to relieve the veterinary technician of any responsibility and liability for any of his own acts and omissions.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-22.1, enacted by Laws 1975, ch. 96, § 11; 1995, ch. 154, § 6.

61-14-17 Inoculation records; confidentiality. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

Animal inoculation records maintained by any state or local public agency may be used only in protecting the public health and welfare or by any other government agency and are not public records open to inspection or duplication. Upon request, the agency shall verify, or deny, as the case may be, that the records reflect that a particular animal has received inoculations within the next preceding twelve months.

History: 1978 Comp., § 61-14-17, enacted by Laws 1995, ch. 154, § 7.

61-14-18 Practicing without license; penalty. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

It is a misdemeanor for any person to practice veterinary medicine without complying with the provisions of the Veterinary Practice Act and without being the holder of a license entitling him to practice veterinary medicine in New Mexico.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-24, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 13; 1999, ch. 243, § 4.

61-14-19 Injunction. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The board or any person may bring an action in the district court to enjoin any person who is not a licensed veterinarian from engaging in the practice of veterinary medicine. If the court finds that the defendant is violating or threatening to violate the Veterinary Practice Act, it shall enter an order restraining him from the violation. Any person so enjoined who violates the injunction may be punished for contempt of court. This remedy by injunction shall be in addition to any remedy provided for criminal prosecution of the offender.

History: 1953 Comp., § 67-11-25, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 62, § 14; 1999, ch. 243, § 5.

61-14-20 Termination of agency life; delayed repeal. (Repealed effective July 1, 2006.)

The board of veterinary medicine is terminated on July 1, 2005 pursuant to the Sunset Act [12-9-11 to 12-9-21 NMSA 1978]. The board shall continue to operate according to the provisions of Chapter 61, Article 14 NMSA 1978 until July 1, 2006. Effective July 1, 2006, Chapter 61, Article 14 NMSA 1978 is repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 61-14-20, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 76, § 2; 1981, ch. 241, § 27; 1985, ch. 87, § 12; 1991, ch. 189, § 22; 1993, ch. 163, § 12; 1997, ch. 46, § 16.