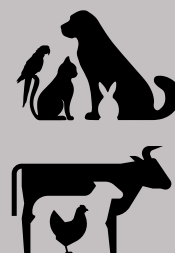


Access to veterinary care is a major animal welfare crisis affecting pets, livestock, and animal caretakers across the United States. We investigated:

- How ‘access’ to veterinary care has been defined
- Barriers associated with access to veterinary care
- How access to veterinary care may impact the welfare of companion and livestock animals

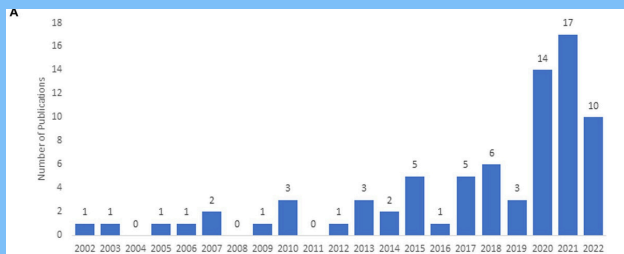


Methods



We searched academic databases (PubMed, Web of Science, CAB Abstracts) and screened publications to see if they defined ‘access’ to care, discussed barriers to accessing care, and reported how access to care impacts animal welfare.

Literature Review



- Of 1,042 publications, 77 were relevant.
- 50% of included publications were in veterinary journals.
- Dogs and cattle were the most common companion and livestock species represented.
- The first study on access to veterinary care was published in 2002, but interest in this area has substantially increased, especially after 2020.

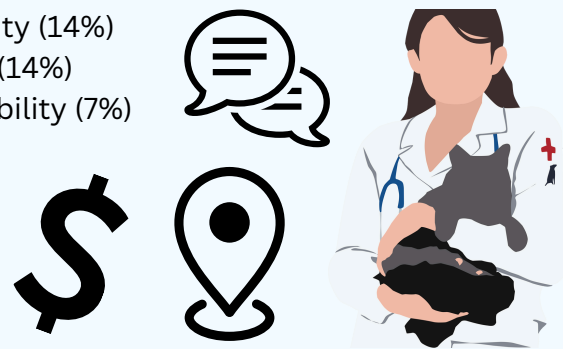
Results

Defining access to veterinary care: Common themes

- geographical proximity (36%)
- affordability (14%)
- service utilization (14%)
- service availability (14%)
- communication (14%)
- physical accessibility (7%)

Commonly named barriers to accessing veterinary care:

- financial limitations (27%)
- geographic location (16%)
- limited personnel/equipment (15%)



Impact on animal welfare

Few studies reported on the impact access to veterinary care may have on animal welfare, with more reporting on the impact on health than behavior

Research Takeaways

The impact of access to veterinary care on animal welfare has been overlooked.

Disparities in accessing veterinary care may be related to factors that broadly contribute to healthcare inequality.

We have proposed a definition of ‘access’ to veterinary care that considers the constraints identified in the literature.