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By [Horsetalk.co.nz](#) on Sep 05, 2012 in [Focus](#)

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A veterinary cooperative aimed at helping America's independent vets compete against chains and big-box stores has started taking membership applications.

The Veterinary Cooperative (TVC) has researched the marketplace for two years and chief executive Richard Morris said it expects to get 5000 members over the next five years.

Morris said the aim of the cooperative was to improve animal hospital owners' purchasing power and service options so they could compete with the buying power of the much bigger providers.

Morris said recent trends in the industry, including the entry of Wal-Mart into the market for selling prescriptions for pets, and The Fairness to Pet Owners Act that would require veterinarians to provide written disclosure that customers can fill a prescription off-site, threaten the ability of independent veterinarians to compete.

"Small vet clinics don't have the sales volume, skills, staff or time to negotiate on their own, especially when corporately owned hospitals, chains and online players promote retail prices that are below independent operators' costs," Morris said.

TVC's chief advisory officer, veterinarian Don Holst, who owns Arlington Park Veterinary Hospital in Rolling Meadows, Illinois, said better pricing was an important objective, but it would not stop there.

"There is more money to be made for an independent veterinarian by sharing best practices in operations, marketing, and patient care."

TVC will also develop tools that members can use to improve their pricing decisions and automatically update their practice management systems. Each veterinary practice will still make its own independent decisions, but will be armed with better tools and information.

Based on market research and the enthusiastic response at veterinary shows, Morris believes the co-op can acquire at least 5000 members within the next five years.

"When it does, it will be a powerful force in the market, with more buying power and locations than many of the big-box stores."

TVC will be owned by its independent veterinary members.

More information: [www.TVC.coop](http://www.TVC.coop).

TVC's board, in addition to Dr Holst, includes: Amir Shanan DVM, owner of Compassionate Veterinary Care in Chicago; Ronald Anders, DVM, owner of County Animal Clinic, Inc. Coldwater, Ohio; and Scott Carlin, owner of APC Veterinary Clinic in Tulsa, OK.



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