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Vet Co-op Offers Free Membership

A new player in the collective clinic game, the Veterinary Cooperative of Evanston, Ill., launched in September and had garnered 40 clients in eight states by mid-October.

The Veterinary Cooperative was founded by Rich Morris, a veteran of the automotive industry who witnessed a similar trend toward chains when auto parts chain stores such as AutoZone and O'Reilly's bought smaller independent stores or drove them out of business.

Morris said his cooperative will compete with the Banfields and VCAs of the world by leveraging the collective buying power of its members to secure better prices from pharmaceutical companies.

"The only way the independents can stay alive is to look and smell like the big guys," Morris said.

Joining is free through the end of the year. Membership will require a one-time \$2,500 fee starting Jan. 1,

but Morris said the cooperative will allow free entry through January to anyone who mentions this article.

The cooperative will finance its operations by redeeming rebates from the companies from which it purchases goods, Morris said. Rebates should outweigh the costs within the first two years, which would allow the cooperative to pay a dividend to members, he said.

The Veterinary Cooperative will not play a role in distribution but will work directly with manufacturers. The co-op hopes to establish an online portal after it reaches 1,000 members to streamline the product ordering process.

Morris plans to tap into the collective knowledge of members to provide best practices through what he termed a "playbook."

Clinics interested in joining the cooperative can find information at TheVeterinaryCooperative.coop.