

FAQS SHEET ON VETERINARY MEDICINE

What does “Veterinary Medicine” mean? It is from the Latin word meaning “of cattle.” But today it means, “the study of all species, including humans.”

Why would someone want to become a veterinarian? The number one reason is because they love animals. They also may like science and solving puzzles and interested in research and math. Another reason is because they want to help people and animals to be healthy.

What was the first animal domesticated by humans? It was the dog, about 15,000 years ago

Are there more dogs or cats in the United States? There are more cats. There are more than 70 million cats as pets and there are 62 million dogs as pets in the United States currently.

What are the main career paths in veterinary medicine?

- 1) **Private Practice:** These vets work with all different kinds of animals from cats and dogs, to horses, pigs and cows to sharks, elephants and tigers. Some vets will get more education to practice in a specific area like surgery or behavior or work on a specific part of the body like the heart, kidneys or eyes.
- 2) **Academia/Academic Medicine (Teaching & Research):** These vets teach veterinary medicine to students. They can work in laboratories and conduct research. Some vets will care for the research animals as well.
- 3) **Regulatory Medicine:** These vets will work to keep our food animals safe, like chickens, cows, fish, goats, pigs and sheep. They inspect animals that come into the United States to make sure that they are not sick, so we do not get sick.
- 4) **Public Health:** These vets work to study, control and prevent animal diseases that can be passed to people, like Rabies and West Nile Virus. They also examine safety of medicines and food additives, and they examine the effects of pesticides and other pollutants on people and animals.
- 5) **Uniformed Services:** US Military Veterinarians monitor diseases like West Nile Virus, HIV-Aids and manage vaccination programs for illnesses like the flu. They provide medical care for US military animals and US military personnel-owned pets and help to educate people and establish animal health programs around the world (for example: they helped to rebuild the Baghdad Zoo).
- 6) **Industry:** These veterinarians test and supervise the production of drugs, chemicals and antibiotics and vaccines for people and animals.

There are other specialty areas for veterinarians like animal welfare, forensic medicine and veterinarians in Congress/Political office.

Will there always be a need for veterinarians? Yes. As long as people have animals as pets and as long as there are diseases that need cures and vaccinations to prevent them, there will be veterinarians. As long as there are people and a need for human medicine, there will be a need for veterinary medicine.

If I am interested in becoming a veterinarian, what can I do now? In high school, you can take science and math classes. You may also want to join a 4-H club or the Future Farmers of America (FFA). You can volunteer or work at an animal hospital, clinic or shelter, animal rescue, animal control or humane society. In college, you may also want to join a Pre-Vet club. Grades are important, but animal/veterinary experience is also important when applying for veterinary school. You can ask about shadowing a veterinarian and ask questions to find out if veterinary medicine is the right career for you.

How much school does it take to become a veterinarian? After High School, you will go to college for usually about 4 years. After that, you can apply for veterinary school. Veterinary school usually takes about 4 years to complete. After you graduate, you will take a national and state board exam and once you pass, you can practice veterinary medicine. If you decide you want to be a specialist in a certain area of medicine, you can take additional schooling which consists of a 1-3 year internship, residency or certification program.

Is it hard to be accepted into veterinary school? Veterinary school can be hard to get into since many students are trying to get in and there are more students than spots. To better your chances, study hard in math and science and try to get some veterinary or animal-related experience before you apply.

How many veterinary schools are there in the United States? In the US, there are 28 schools. There are also veterinary schools in other countries. If you want to work in veterinary medicine, but you do not want to go to vet school, there are veterinary technician and distance learning programs available too.

How can I afford veterinary school? While veterinary school can be expensive, there are financial assistance, scholarship and grant programs available. You can contact your state veterinary medical association, the veterinary college itself and the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges: www.aavmc.org for information on financial assistance and grants/scholarships available.

What is the average salary of a veterinarian once you graduate? Veterinarian's salaries will vary quite a bit. The salary can range from \$30,000 - \$150,000 per year. However, on average, a first year veterinarian will make between \$30,000 - \$65,000 annually. The reason this is so varied is because of many factors such as location, position at the hospital, number of years in practice and the area of veterinary medicine. Board-certified specialists, on average, make more than general practicing veterinarians, but the salaries really vary.

If you have more questions, write them down and ask your veterinarian or contact the American Veterinary Medical Association:

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