

YOUR CAREER IN VETERINARY MEDICINE

Slide 1: What is a Veterinarian?

Hello, my name is Dr. _____ and I am a veterinarian. Have you ever wanted to work with animals and help people and animals to stay healthy? Well, I'm here to explain what veterinarians do and answer some of your questions.

Slide 2: Pets

Veterinarians are doctors for all kinds of animals. They take care of pets like your cat, dog, hamster or rabbit.

How many of you have a pet at home? (*show of hands*)

Slide 3: Farm Animals

They can also take care of animals on the farm like goats, cows, pigs and chickens.

Slide 4: Zoo Animals & Wildlife

Some veterinarians work in zoos or aquariums and take care of animals such as tigers, elephants and dolphins. Some work with wildlife like ducks and deer.

Slide 5: Vets help people and animals

Veterinarians not only help all species of animals, but they help people too.

Slide 6: Where do you go?

Your pets are important to your family. But what happens if they get sick or hurt? Where do you go? (*pause for response*)

That's right! You take your pets to the veterinarian or "vet" for short.

Slide 7: Exams

Your pets should get a check-up once or twice a year to make sure they are healthy.

The vet will examine your pet by taking their temperature, checking their eyes and teeth, listening to their heart and lungs and checking their weight and take their temperature. Basically, the vet will give your pet a thorough exam, looking and feeling for signs that something isn't normal. They look at pretty much the same (or similar) things that your doctor

looks at when they give you a check-up, but you're lucky that your doctor puts the thermometer in your MOUTH!

Slide 8: Vaccines & medicines

If your pet is healthy, the veterinarian might give your pet vaccines (often called "shots") to help prevent diseases like distemper, parvo and rabies, or give you medications that prevent your pet from getting worms or heartworms. A lot of what vets do is PREVENTING disease, because we'd rather keep your pets from getting sick in the first place.

Wouldn't you rather stay healthy...even though sick days can sometimes seem like fun? After all, staying home from school isn't much fun when you're really sick, is it? .

But what if your pet isn't healthy?

Slide 9: Helps your pet feel better

This is the reason it is so important to have check-ups. It can be hard to tell sometimes when an animal is sick – some pets, especially cats, will pretend they're feeling just fine when they're actually sick.

If you have regular check-ups, then a veterinarian has a better chance of finding out that your pet is not feeling good before they get very sick. Catching a problem early makes it easier to treat it and make your pet healthy again.

The veterinarian can make your pet feel better...sometimes that means performing surgery on your pet...sometimes it means giving your pet medicine...sometimes it means changing your pet's diet or exercise level, or other changes to keep them healthy .

Slide 10: Problem signs:

But what can **you** do to help your veterinarian keep your pet healthy?

You know your pet better than anyone else. If they start to act differently, then pay attention.

(Click for bullet points)

Are they going to the bathroom more than usual? Or less?

Is your pet eating or drinking more than usual? Or less?

Do they sleep more than usual?

Do they act differently? Does your pet seem more grumpy or jumpier than usual?

Does your pet seem aggressive, mean or does it seem like your pet is in pain?

If you notice anything that seems different, your pet may be trying to tell you that they don't feel good. You and your parents should contact your veterinarian and have a check-up for your pet.

Cats are especially good at pretending they're not sick, so it's really important you take them to the veterinarian if there's any sign of illness.

Slide 11: What do you see?

Here are some real pictures of x-rays of animals who were not feeling good. Can anyone tell me what these are? *(wait for students to answer)*

(Click presentation slide to reveal answer)

Picture 1: This is an x-ray of a rabbit that has bladder stones.

Picture 2: This is an x-ray of a hamster that has an overgrown tooth.

Slide 12: Under the microscope

Some things can be found by looking at an x-ray or an ultrasound, but there are also many things that can be found in the blood or in the hair – these things are so small that they can only be seen under a microscope.

The picture on the left is blood from a dog that has been infected with heartworms. The picture on the right is a hair follicle of a hamster infested with demodex mange mites.

Slide 13: What's wrong?

Our pets can't talk, so they have to tell us something is wrong in a different way. Sometimes, we don't always know what our pet is trying to tell us. It can be hard to tell what's going on.

It can be something as simple as "Hey, I don't like this new food." Or "Please play with me." But sometimes it can be "I don't feel good" or "This hurts."

That is why a veterinarian is so important. Veterinarians need to figure out what is wrong and how to fix it.

Slide 14: My Story – why I became a veterinarian

(Add a personal story here if desired)

Slide 15: What else can vets do?

Well, we've talked about veterinarians who treat your pets and farm animals...but what else can veterinarians do? (*answer responses from students*)

Veterinarians take care of animals like a doctor takes care of people. But many people don't know all of the possibilities.

Slide 16: Teaching & Research

Veterinarians can be teachers and researchers. They work in a classroom, laboratory or hospital and teach future veterinarians. These vets find ways to prevent and solve health problems in people and animals, and they work to develop ways to cure diseases and improve our health.

Did you know that a veterinarian discovered *Salmonella*, which is a bacteria that people can get from touching or eating raw meat or animal products without washing their hands? Or that a veterinarian discovered a blood thinner medication for people? A veterinarian developed organ transplant techniques and another veterinarian helped to control some diseases like *malaria* and *yellow fever*, which are diseases transmitted by mosquitoes that can make people very sick.

Slide 17: Regulatory Medicine & Public Health

Veterinarians can work in regulatory medicine or public health, keeping our food safe and making sure animals receive good care. Some of them examine animals that come into the United States from other countries to make sure that they do not have any diseases that could be spread to other animals in our country.

Slide 18: Industry and Uniformed Services

Veterinarians can work in industry to make sure medicines and vaccines are safe and that they work to protect both people and animals. Veterinarians can also work in the military and help teach people in other countries how to keep their animals healthy. There have even been veterinarians in space!

Slide 19: Start planning now!

As you just learned, veterinarians can do a lot of different things. Does becoming a veterinarian sound fun and interesting to you? If so, you can start planning now!

Do you like math and science? Do you like working with animals and people? Do you like solving problems and learning new things? If you answered yes to these questions, then you may want to think about becoming a veterinarian.

Slide 20: School

Does anyone know how long it takes to become a veterinarian? (*answer responses from students*)

During high school, you should get good grades in math and science. You also want to get some experience working with animals. Vet schools are also looking for 'well-rounded' students, too. What does that mean? It means you should get a variety of experiences. Leadership experience, such as student government or club leadership, can help. Don't forget, you should have good communication skills because you need to be able to talk to people.

After high school, you need to go to college and take classes to prepare for veterinary school. It usually takes about 3-4 years of college to get the courses you'll need. After college, if you're accepted, it's off to veterinary school, which is about another 4 years.

Slide 21: Experience

Since many people want to become veterinarians and there is not a lot of space in the schools to take everyone, it's competitive. It's important that you start getting experience early. For one, you want to make sure it's what you really want to do – and the only way to find that out is to see it firsthand. Two, you'll learn a lot. Three, that vet might write you a good letter of recommendation for vet school.

To get experience, you can do volunteer work for a veterinarian or an animal shelter; or even shadow a veterinarian, for example. You can work with animals on a farm or ranch, or even in a laboratory. Some people choose to join a 4-H or FFA club while in high school and even a pre-vet club while in college. These are all ways to get some great experience working with animals.

Slide 21: Veterinary Technicians

Still not sure if becoming a veterinarian is right for you? Does the amount of school seem too long? It's okay; there are many other options out there in the career of veterinary medicine.

You can still work with animals. You can still keep people and animals safe. You can become a veterinary technician. Veterinary technicians are similar to nurses in human medicine.

Vet techs work closely with the veterinarian. They help by holding the animals while the veterinarian examines and treats them, give medication to the animals, collect laboratory samples (such as blood or urine), perform certain procedures and tests and much more. They can assist during surgeries and talk to the pet owners about their animal's health and proper care. They also can administer treatments and monitor patients. These are just some of the things that a veterinary technician can do.

Slide 23: The Veterinary Health Care Team

If you know that you want to work with animals, at a veterinary hospital or clinic but you do not think becoming a veterinarian or a veterinary technician is right for you, think about a career as part of the veterinary healthcare team. Some examples include veterinary assistants, receptionists and office staff, and kennel workers.

The veterinary team is made up of caring people who want to give the best quality care for the animals and meaningful interactions with the owners.

Slide 24: There is a place just for you!

I know you learned a lot today about veterinary medicine, but there are always new things to learn. Veterinarians will always be around as long as there are animals, people and diseases.

If you weren't sure about becoming a veterinarian before, you just learned that there is a place in veterinary medicine just for you!

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