



Veterinary Science...for all

Walks of Life

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Don't follow the herd

Jon Reader, large animal vet, says:

"Farm animal practice has changed a lot. We are heavily involved with herd health and reducing disease – improving animal health and welfare. There's nothing like seeing positive economic effects that have come from your advice. It can be a mucky old job, but it's great to be working in the fresh air, out on the road. Some days you go out to a difficult calving and come away with a healthy cow and live calf - everyone's happy!"



Walk this way...



- Do you thrive on problem-solving?
- Does science inspire you?
- Would you like to be your own boss?
- Fancy the outdoors as your office?
- Would you like to be a surgeon?
- Do you enjoy meeting people?
- Would you like to work with animals?

One or more 'yeses', and veterinary science could be for you.

A career as a vet will bring you into contact with all walks of life, from furry or feathered creatures who trot, fly and pounce, to those of us, including animal owners and keepers, who walk about on two feet.

This brochure will walk you through what it takes to be a vet, its rewards, and where to start.

For all walks of life

Vets work to diagnose and treat sick animals. They are also involved in managing disease outbreaks to protect both animals and humans. It's a profession full of variety and the opportunities are diverse.

Vets are healthcare professionals for the animal kingdom. One vet takes on roles carried out by many separate individuals in human medicine, such as surgery, radiology, pharmacy and preventative healthcare – and on animal species from aardvarks to zebras. You could call vets the medical superheroes!

A veterinary degree not only gives you the opportunity to work in clinical practice, but can also be a passport to a range of other careers, at home and abroad.



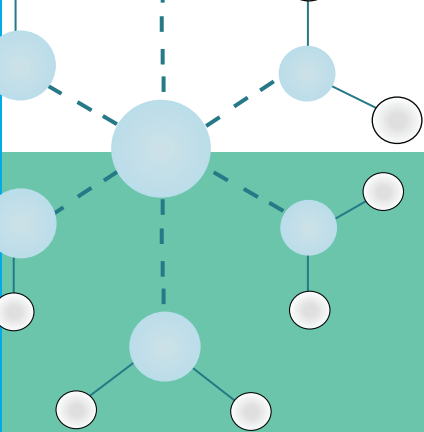
You could end up in scientific research, the pharmaceutical or animal nutrition industries, travelling abroad on wildlife projects, working in government to maintain biosecurity in the UK, in referral practice dealing with specialist cases in hi-tech environments, as a lecturer or researcher in a university, or even treating sniffer dogs in the army.

The opportunities are as diverse as the people in the veterinary profession.



Vets behind the headlines

The work of a vet is not restricted to animals. Bird flu, salmonella, rabies, CJD – you will have seen them in the news. They are all diseases that affect humans as well as animals and in helping to control them, veterinary surgeons are effectively gatekeepers for human health. About two-thirds of new infectious diseases that threaten humans come from animals. Vets have made other direct contributions to human health too, for example, developing techniques for joint replacements or organ transplantations.



Other diseases that mainly affect animals – such as foot and mouth disease, BSE and bluetongue – can have a huge impact, costing the UK hundreds of millions of pounds. The role of the vet in identifying and containing disease outbreaks, not to mention researching vaccines and treatments – is critical to the UK economy.



A veterinary degree means

- Diverse opportunities
- Career stability – very low levels of unemployment¹
- Packages starting at about £31,000 for newly-qualified vets, rising to around £70,000 for vets qualified more than 20 years²
- Being your own boss
- Respect within the community
- Ability to make a real difference to health and welfare for both animals and people
- Rare combination of a caring profession and good earning potential
- A passport to work abroad

¹RCVS Survey of the Profession 2014

²SPVS Salary Survey 2014



Leading the field

Richard Irvine, from the Animal and Plant Health Agency, says:

“At the APHA I am dealing with the diseases behind the headlines, such as Avian Influenza, as well as the overall health and welfare of farmed animals. It’s about ensuring the food we buy and eat is healthy and safe. We investigate the spread of diseases and communicate to government, vets, farmers, the food industry and the public about disease diagnosis, control and management. Using the scientific grounding of the veterinary degree, I am constantly learning new things. It is challenging, but very rewarding work.”



Walk in the park?



What does it take to be a vet? It can be a demanding career – physically, emotionally and mentally. But it also brings tremendous rewards.

Firstly, you will be expected to complete a five- or six-year degree course, where you will learn to work hard and play hard, in a fun and supportive environment.

While at university, you will also be expected to carry out 38 weeks of Extra-Mural Studies, such as working in private veterinary practices, on farms and in food hygiene.

Getting on to the course requires high academic standards, but this isn't to make the profession elitist.

The simple fact is that you need strong brain power in order to stay the course.

Science first

The veterinary curriculum includes many 'ologies' – epidemiology, microbiology, parasitology, pathology, pharmacology, physiology, immunology...not to mention anatomy, biochemistry and biophysics.

This provides an excellent broad knowledge that is well respected in the scientific community. Some veterinary graduates go on to forge inspiring careers in scientific research, often in human medicine.



In addition, veterinary degree courses include, among other things, animal behaviour, husbandry and welfare, law and ethics, nutrition, practice management, public health, communications, rural economics, medicine, surgery and diagnostic imaging.

On graduation you will join a relatively small profession of about 20,000 practising vets in the UK. The support of your peers will help you cope with life as a vet, which will have its challenges. Some days you might have to deal with difficult clients, euthanase (put to sleep) a much-loved pet in order to end its suffering, or stand on a cold and windy hillside treating a reluctant sheep.

But there are immense benefits...

...delivering a new-born animal, saving the life of someone's beloved pet, nurturing the vets of the future, running your own business, discovering a vaccine for an economically-damaging disease – these can be priceless satisfactions.



Do you have what it takes?

- Good communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to think independently
- Practicality
- Good business sense
- Interest in people as well as animals
- Patience and good humour
- Strength of character and stamina
- High personal standards
- Ability to supervise support staff



Live life at a gallop

David Mountford, Director at VetCell Bioscience Ltd, says:

"At Vetcell, we commercialise technologies based on veterinary research. We aim to provide veterinary services throughout the world and move into human medicine. Running my own business has taken me all over the world, meeting fascinating people. My vet degree gave me an analytical approach to problem-solving and the ability to communicate with different types of people – it's definitely opened doors for me."



Spread your wings: starting in practice

On graduation, the majority of vets start their careers in general practice, although many will continue with further studies. Practice could be companion animal (pets), farm animal, equine (horses) or 'mixed'. You might also get the opportunity to work with exotic animals that are kept as pets, in zoos or in the wild.

There is no National Health Service for animals. Veterinary practices are run as private businesses, including many large corporate chains, although there are also animal charities – such as the RSPCA or PDSA – offering discounted services for those in need.

Most graduates will start in practice as an Assistant, working closely with more senior colleagues. After a few years, Assistants may be invited to



become Partners, which means they take a financial stake in the business and have greater control over the way in which it is run.

Over time, you may own your own practice, or string of practices – the only limit is your ambition.

One thing all vets share is being part of a profession. This brings benefits and also responsibilities. Vets are looked up to as respected members of society and need to ensure they live up to this in the way they think, speak and act.



Diving in

There can be a lot of routine work in clinical practice, especially in the early years, such as vaccination, worming and neutering. You also need to be prepared for long hours. But there is plenty of variety. Giving emergency care to a run-over dog at 3am will get the adrenaline flowing, and performing surgery is a privilege as well as a skill.



You will typically be working with veterinary nurses, practice managers, kennel staff, lab technicians, veterinary colleagues and clients, so the ability to work in a team is critical. Dr Doolittle may have been able to talk to the animals, but for most vets the challenge is to convey complex, often technical, messages to other humans.



Practice makes perfect

- Majority of new graduates start in clinical practice
- Practice types include companion animal, horses, farm animal, exotics or mixed animal
- Graduate packages sometimes include a car and accommodation
- Flexible career that can accommodate breaks for travel or family
- Many part-time opportunities
- Typical vet in general practice works around 41 hours a week¹ and, in addition, many take a share in on-call emergency work

¹RCVS Survey of the Profession 2014



Take a walk on the wild side

Sharon Redrobe, zoo vet, says:

"Vets play an important role in conservation.

Many of the animals at Bristol Zoo are rare or endangered – even extinct in the wild. We

need to preserve their breeding and keep them as healthy as possible.

Veterinary skills also help in terms of the bigger picture, for example, I've been to a rehabilitation unit for chimps and gorillas in Cameroon and worked in Indonesia on bird flu. It's the variety and intellectual stimulation that keep my work interesting!"



Best foot forward

If you think a career as a vet sounds right for you, it's never too soon to take the first step.

It's really important to experience veterinary work at first hand, to make sure it's a lifestyle that will suit you. Talk to your local vet as soon as you can about work experience.

To practise as a vet in the UK you need to be a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the governing body of the profession. To do that, you need to hold an approved degree, follow ethical and professional standards and agree to keep your skills and knowledge up to date. UK veterinary degrees enable you to practise across the EU and in places further afield, such as Australia and New Zealand.



So a veterinary degree could be your passport to working abroad!

There are seven RCVS-approved UK veterinary degrees, from the universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, London (Royal Veterinary College) and Nottingham. A new course at the University of Surrey is undergoing an approval process in time for its first graduates in 2019.

Your application needs to be made though UCAS by 15 October in the year before you hope to start: www.ucas.ac.uk. This is earlier than for many other degrees, so jump to it!

Qualifications required

Each of the veterinary schools asks for slightly different entry qualifications. All expect applicants to demonstrate their commitment by carrying out relevant work experience, for example, in practice, on a farm, in kennels or at a pet rescue centre.

The profession is keen to recruit talented individuals, whatever their walk of life. The Royal Veterinary College, supported by the veterinary schools at Liverpool, Bristol and Edinburgh Universities, offers the opportunity for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not hold the right qualifications to take a foundation year before joining the main course. The University of Nottingham has a similar course and also aims to increase diversity through a six-year degree course designed for high-achieving students with non-science backgrounds.

If you have a disability that you think might affect what you are able to do, please talk to the veterinary schools to which you intend to apply for guidance.

More opportunities

Although vet school places have increased in the last few years, it's still a very popular course. Think about how you can make yourself stand out from the crowd when writing your UCAS personal statement – the profession welcomes diversity.

If you want a career in an animal-related area, veterinary medicine is just one option. Veterinary nursing, zoology, animal science, conservation work or animal health, behaviour or welfare...these are just a few of the options that you could also explore.

Applications

- Eight UK vet schools – each with specific qualification requirements
- General guide: AAA/AAB at A Level, AAAAB at SCE (usually including Biology and Chemistry)
- BMAT required for Cambridge and London – www.bmat.org.uk
- Demonstrate your commitment in the form of work experience
- Options for those without standard qualifications: one-year pre-degree course or six-year vet degree
- Vet school places increasing
- Apply through UCAS by 15 October



Paws for thought

Sanjay Mangabhai, small animal vet, says:

"My parents wanted me to be a doctor but I thought a career as a vet offered me much more. I enjoy working with pets and feel I play an important role in the community. Being my own boss was always the attraction and I knew I wanted to own a practice when I graduated. There are time commitments working in small animal practice, but it's a very rewarding career. I'm where I wanted to be!"





www.walksoflife.org.uk

For more information, and links to the veterinary schools and entry requirements, please visit:

www.rcvs.org.uk/education/i-want-to-be-a-vet or email **education@rcvs.org.uk**. To view the videos that accompany this leaflet, please visit **www.youtube.com/vetcareers**

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