

What do veterinarians do?

Most veterinarians in the U.S. work in private practice. While veterinarians are licensed to care for a wide variety of animals (dogs, cats, horses, farm animals, exotics, etc.), most limit their practice to certain types of animals or medical specialties. Currently, the majority



of veterinarians in the U.S. provide medical care for pets such as dogs and cats.

Veterinarians also work in teaching,

research, private industry, and government, expanding scientific knowledge and finding solutions to human and animal health problems. Most organizations housing or using animals utilize veterinary services, including: zoos, aquatic animal parks, meat production and inspection, the space program, wildlife management, racetracks, circuses, animal shelters, the military, and more.

Is veterinary medicine the right choice for me?

Working and talking with veterinarians, veterinary students, and veterinary technicians and staff is the best way to get a realistic picture of the profession. Veterinary medicine is a big commitment, both academically and personally. A prospective veterinarian should be a good student with strong science and math skills.

A veterinarian must have compassion for both animals and people, enjoy working with people, and possess strong communication skills because every animal comes with a human. Veterinarians must be willing to advise clients on decisions that will have significant financial and emotional impact.

Since I love animals, isn't veterinary medicine a perfect career for me?

While veterinary medicine can be richly rewarding, a veterinarian's day is not filled solely with adorable animals. It is important to develop a realistic picture of the profession before choosing this career. Failure to understand the demands and challenges of the profession can lead to dissatisfaction. Veterinarians must handle failure, loss, grieving and angry clients, and sometimes animals that have been neglected.

Veterinary education is equivalent to that of a physician in time, cost, and intensity. However, veterinary salaries are typically much lower than those seen in other medical and advanced professions.

A Love of animals is not enough to make veterinary medicine a good career choice.

How long do I have to go to school?

In the United States, veterinary school is a four-year degree program following undergraduate Bachelor's degree level education (a total of 7 to 9 years: 3-5 years undergraduate plus 4 years of veterinary school).

After graduating from veterinary school, many new graduates choose an additional year of general or specialty clinical training as interns. Some pursue 2 to 5 years of additional residency training leading to board certification and practice within a wide variety of medical or surgical specialties, such as neurology, cardiology, dermatology, orthopedic surgery, equine medicine, zoo medicine, etc.



How do I prepare for veterinary school? Is there a "good" major?

What experience do I need?

Each veterinary school's website lists the school's application process and pre-requisites. In general you will need to take a number of classes including: biology, math, English, chemistry, and physics to apply. Veterinary schools will consider any undergraduate that has taken the courses required by that school. Most schools require that you also take the GRE, get letters of recommendation, and submit a personal statement. Although there are generally not specific experience requirements, prospective veterinary students should acquire animal experience by working for or shadowing a veterinarian in private practice, in research, at a zoo, on a farm, or in an animal shelter.

How much does it cost to attend veterinary school?

First, consider the cost of your undergraduate education. Veterinary school costs vary depending upon whether you attend a private or a public school and whether you have residence in that state. Like all higher education costs, the cost of



veterinary school has risen many times above the increases in the costs of living over the past three decades.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, one year of veterinary school tuition plus average living costs ranged from \$40,000 to \$85,000. While some students are able to defray some of the costs through scholarships or private means, the majority of veterinary students must finance their education through loans. In 2012 the average veterinary student graduated with over \$150,000 of debt. If veterinary school expenses continue to increase at current rates, 2017 graduates would have a projected average debt of over \$200,000.

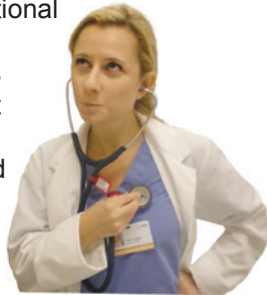
**Wow! That's a lot of money.
Veterinarians must have very high salaries
to pay back those loans.**

Average salaries for new graduates in private practice are around \$65,000 and have not been increasing in recent years. Trends over the last decade in veterinary medicine show the cost of education far outpacing the starting salaries of veterinarians. Most veterinary graduates expect to be repaying their student loans over a 20 or 30 year period.

Recent legislation has lessened the student loan repayment burden for some graduates who borrow from the federal government. Several repayment options called Income Based Repayment (IBR) and Pay as You Earn (PAYE) set monthly payments to a proportion of income. These programs are evolving and do not apply to private loans. Information about IBR and other government student loan programs can be found at www.studentaid.ed.gov and www.vinfoundation.org.

Is becoming a veterinarian worth it?

For many generations of veterinarians, the positives of the profession far outweighed the negatives. The past two decades have seen significant increases in educational costs without a comparable increase in salaries. The hours can be long, the physical effort grueling, and the emotional impact of treating ill and injured animals daily can be difficult. While salaries vary widely, veterinarians rarely become wealthy.



As long as there are animals, there will be a need for veterinarians to care for them. The emotional and intellectual rewards of veterinary medicine are rich and diverse. The career of a veterinarian offers interest, challenge, excitement, and unparalleled opportunities to celebrate the human-animal bond and to contribute to the welfare of humans and animals.

For further information regarding the economics of attending veterinary school and for tools to help decide if veterinary medicine is right for you, visit www.IWANTtoBEAVETERINARIAN.org

I want to be a Veterinarian ...

IWANTtoBEAVETERINARIAN.org



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**Frequently Asked Questions
About Becoming a Veterinarian:**