

Advanced Certifications *for* Veterinary Technicians



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“Going through the veterinary technician specialty (VTS) process was exhilarating and humbling; challenging and exhausting; frustrating and also fulfilling. It was long from October 2010 to September 2012 but during that time, I learned more than I ever thought I could. The process was so valuable for increasing my knowledge in every area of my specialization.”

Achieving my VTS in Small Animal Internal Medicine has given me more confidence as I practice veterinary technology every day. Now, I strive to educate my coworkers and clients on the value of specialization.”

Hey, credentialed technicians! Are you looking to advance your career? This “Tech Talk” brings you the information you need to obtain a veterinary technician specialty (VTS) license, registration, or certification, as well as one technician’s experience, in her own words.

Your Veterinary Technician Specialization—Where to Begin?

If you work in clinical medicine, start

at the website for the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (navta.net/specialties/specialties), which is devoted to clinical medicine specialties. There you’ll find links to the following academies:

If you work in laboratory medicine, the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (aalas.org) has 3 levels of certification in the laboratory animal field: ALAT (Assistant Lab Animal Technician), LAT (Lab

Animal Technician), and LATG (Lab Animal Technologist).

If you have an interest in practice management, the Veterinary Hospital Management Association (vhma.org) offers certification to become a certified veterinary practice manager (CVPM). The VHMA notes there were only 310 active CVPMs as of October 2012, so earning this certification will likely give you an advantage not many in the industry have.

You might also consider certification as Professional in Human Resources (PHR) or Senior in Professional Human Resources (SPHR), both offered by the Human Resource Certification Institute (hrci.org). Although these certifications are not specific to veterinary medicine, managers who work in veterinary hospitals have found them to be beneficial.

If you're more interested in hands-on clinical applications, consider these options:

- Pain management certification can be obtained through the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management. The Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner title, which is unique to veterinary technicians and veterinarians, represents a dedication to pain management.
- Rehabilitation is another area where technicians can be vital. There are 2 certifications for technicians:
 - Certified Canine Rehabilitation Assistant (CCRA)
 - Certified Canine Rehabilitation Technician (CCRT)

Technicians can also earn an ultrasound certification through Sound Technologies. Websites for these can be found in the handout.

Last but not least, you may find yourself passionate about end-of-life care. The Pet Loss and Grief Companioning certification may be ideal for you.

Take a Look!

Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians	Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians
Academy of Veterinary Technician Anesthetists	Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice
Academy of Internal Medicine for Veterinary Technicians (small/large animal internal medicine, neurology, cardiology, oncology)	Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians
Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians	Academy of Veterinary Clinical Pathology Technicians
Academy of Veterinary Behavior Technicians	Academy of Veterinary Surgical Technicians
Academy of Veterinary Zoological Medicine Technicians	

Insightful information about this certification is available from Two Hearts Pet Loss Center (pet-loss-grief.com).

What's Involved?

Before you can apply for most certifications, you will need to meet the following or additional criteria:

- Have an associate's (or bachelor's) degree in veterinary technology *and/or* RVT, CVT, or LVT credentials as a veterinary technician or an international equivalent.
- Have completed a predetermined number of work hours in your specialty.
- Have proof you've mastered a set of advanced skills, including written documentation of cases (typically 2-4) that demonstrate your skills in, and advanced knowledge of, your specialty.

You will be required to take a board exam, which is the final process in the certification.

Do You Have What it Takes?

If you're interested in pursuing an advanced degree, evaluate the expertise you already have that qualifies you to participate in one of these programs. For example, if you are a critical care registered veterinary technician (RVT) who admits patients, places catheters, obtains blood pressure, runs lab work, places arterial and central lines, monitors patients for complications and meet all other requirements of the specialty academy—you meet the criteria! Alternatively, if you perform dental exams, dental prophylaxis procedures, take dental radiographs, perform anesthesia and so on...you too may be qualified. So, think about

Do you work in *and* enjoy these areas?

Specialty	Yes	No	If yes, what percentage of your time?
General practice			
Neurology			
Emergency critical care practice			
Surgery			
Laboratory (clinical pathology)			
Laboratory (lab animal nursing)			
Anesthesia			
Nutrition			
Oncology			
Dentistry			
Rehabilitation			
Equine or mixed-animal practice			
Management			
Zoo medicine			

Now that you see what percentage of time you devote to different areas of veterinary medicine, you can start to consider what specialty certifications might help you be more recognized in your fields of choice.

your day to day responsibilities and investigate your options to see what you need to do to qualify for advanced opportunities.

Network with Your Peers

Want to learn more about advanced certifications for veterinary technicians? Use Facebook to connect with other technicians and learn from those who've gone ahead...or share your own experiences! 

For a Certifications for Technicians handout, visit veterinaryteambrief.com

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