



Tipping our Hats to Veterinary Nurses

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Veterinary Nursing in Action

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In 1993, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) executive board passed a resolution declaring the third week of October National Veterinary Technician Week (NVTW) to focus positive attention on the veterinary nursing profession.

According to NAVTA, the NVTW goals are:

- Educating the public about the roles and responsibilities of veterinary nurses
- Reinforcing the value and professionalism of veterinary nurses to veterinarians and the public
- Providing an opportunity for veterinary team members to salute one another for excellent work performance
- Acknowledging veterinarians for hiring credentialed veterinary nurses

NVTW's 2016 theme is "Veterinary Nursing in Action," which connects to the diversity of experiences and species managed in the veterinary profession

and reminds each veterinary nursing team member of the action steps listed in the veterinary technician oath.

In the spirit of this theme, let us look back at the veterinary nursing profession over the past year.

- A task force was established to research the uniformity of a single credential and the terminology that is most representative of our roles and responsibilities on the veterinary team. Kenichiro Yagi, RVT, VTS (ECC, SAIM), and Heather Prendergast, RVT, CVPM, cochair the National Credential Task Force spearheaded by NAVTA.
- **Veterinary Nurse or Veterinary Technician?** on page 41 explains the work that the task force has done exploring and opening up discussions with all constituents involved in this important discussion.
- The Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties announced 2 new specialties—the Academy of Dermatology Veterinary Technicians and the Academy of Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians—bringing the

Veterinary Technician's Oath

I solemnly dedicate myself to aiding animals and society by providing excellent care and services for animals, by alleviating animal suffering, and by promoting public health. I accept my obligations to practice my profession conscientiously and with sensitivity, adhering to the profession's Code of Ethics, and furthering my knowledge and competence through a commitment to lifelong learning.

total of veterinary technician specialty academies to 13, a truly amazing achievement. The very first specialty, the Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians (AVECCT), is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

There are 230 AVMA-accredited veterinary nursing programs and 31 NAVTA-approved veterinary assistant (AVA) programs, proof of the continuing interest in veterinary team professional careers and the need to differentiate each team member's skills and responsibilities.

Veterinary Team Brief recognizes that every veterinary team member is a valuable asset and congratulates the veterinary nursing team on another well-deserved celebration. Use this celebration as the springboard to promote and support teammates and clients. Lift one another UP! Celebrate each other, celebrate the profession, celebrate YOU!

Veterinary Nurse or Veterinary Technician?

An Update on National Credentials

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The veterinary technology profession has been developing since the 1960s and has experienced numerous changes in designated titles, from *animal technician*, to *animal health technician*, to *veterinary technician*. The National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) is spearheading discussions about a nationally unified title and standardized credential requirements within the entire profession.

Since the title *veterinary technician* (VT) was implemented in 1989, efforts to elevate the profession through professional and public education and legislation have been ongoing. Significant progress has been made; however, challenges still need to be overcome, including varying credentialing requirements, professional titles, scope of practice, and job tasks, depending on the state veterinary practice act in the 37 states with established licensure. In 10 of the states without licensure, nonprofit veterinary organizations have implemented voluntary credentialing to uphold similar standards, leaving 5 states and US territories without credentialing systems.

Credential Woes

Currently, a VT is designated a certified VT, registered VT, licensed VT, or licensed veterinary medical technician (LVMT), depending on the credentialing state. (See **Table 1**, page 42.) The lack of standardization has led to widespread confusion regarding the VT's role within the veterinary profession and among members of the general public, who do not clearly understand VT credentialing, leading to these members of the profession having little perceived value.

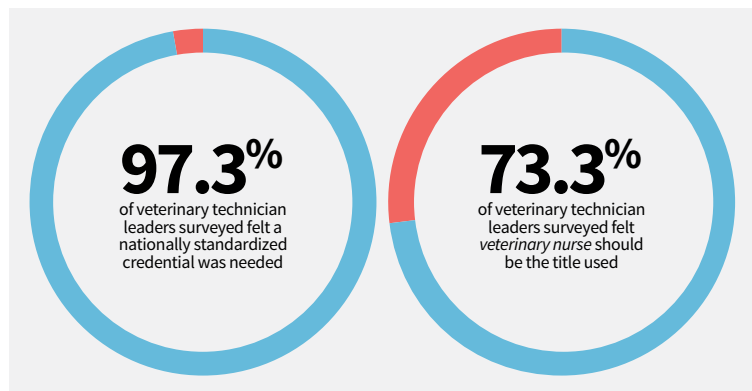
VT leaders expressed the need for nationally standardized credential requirements and a unified title at a summit hosted by NAVTA in July 2015. Standardizing credentialing requirements will ensure high-quality patient care and veterinary consumer protection and

For more information regarding the national credential initiative, visit navta.net or email vetnurse@navta.net.

TABLE 1 | **Credentialing Status of Veterinary Technicians Depending on State of Practice**

Credential status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State licensure • Private credentialing • No credentialing system
Credential type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT) • Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) • Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT) • Licensed Veterinary Medical Technician (LVMT) • None
Education requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal (AVMA-accredited program) • Informal (state-designated alternate routes) • None
Maintenance requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 to 20 hours CE per cycle
Scope of practice and job tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterinary practice act • Voluntary governance • None

Visit brief.vet/credential-map for an interactive map showing state-by-state credentialing status.



▲ FIGURE 1 Results from a survey of leaders of state VT associations and VT specialty academies

DID YOU KNOW?

The top 3 factors most likely to affect veterinary nursing jobs in the next 5 years are:



Source: NAVTA 2016 Demographic Survey

provide avenues to establish reciprocity between states. The title proposed was *veterinary nurse* (VN), which would emphasize the role of the growing profession, facilitate public education, and unite the profession under a single title.

The National Credential Task Force (NCTF) was formed in November 2015 to create a strategy in pursuit of these goals. The NCTF devoted 2016 to gathering stakeholder feedback and researching credential governance and legislative processes to determine the best method for implementing a national credential.

Leader Input

Surveying leaders of state VT associations and VT specialty academies showed 97.3% of respondents felt nationally standardized credential requirements were necessary, with challenges expected to include legislative changes, agreement on a standard, implementation cost, and major stakeholder support (NAVTA, unpublished data, January 2015). A majority (73.3%) of VT leaders were in favor of the VN title (NAVTA, unpublished data, January 2015) but expected challenges in reaching consensus within the profession, including gaining support from nurses and conflicts with nurse title protection, a law that restricts the use of the title *nurse* to those meeting specific requirements. (See **Figure 1.**)

Consultation with attorneys revealed that nurse title protection would cause definite conflict in 16 states, possible conflict in 8, and no conflict in 14. Nurse title protection does not exist in 12 states. The attorneys' report indicated the VN title could be implemented in more than 26 states without conflict. NAVTA is collaborating with the AVMA and the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) to establish a single language in model practice acts pertaining to VTs that can help provide clear title

protection, and help disseminate standards and the unified title from the national level.

The NAVTA 2016 Demographic Survey¹ disseminated to all members of the veterinary field (with the vast majority VTs) showed 90% of respondents felt nationally standardized credentials and a change in title were important, with 54% of respondents favoring VN and 37% favoring VT. The main reasons for favoring VT were the anticipation of conflict with human nurses and believing that VTs perform different tasks than nurses.

Nurses Speak

Although there is a precedent of opposition by nurses in select states, initial surveys indicate more support for the VN term than previously suspected. The prevailing message from nurses is a call for any profession using *nurse* in its title to enforce high education standards and levels of responsibility in their role of patient care. (See **Figure 2.**) NAVTA has initiated discussions with nurse regulatory and advocacy organizations to find common ground and gain insight into further developing veterinary nursing as a proud profession.

Members of the profession commonly say “veterinary technicians do more than nurses” when speaking against the VN title. This comment is made largely from the misconception of a human nurse’s scope of practice and the various professional specializations. When comparing duties, scope of practice is similar, and RNs and VNs deserve equal respect.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the profession’s fate lies with its members. Efforts to establish higher standards in credential requirements, gain professional and public recognition, and protect a unified title will be stifled until the profession moves



▲ FIGURE 2 Veterinary technicians provide expertise in many aspects of nursing care, and initial surveys indicate support for the term *veterinary nurse*.

For More Information About NAVTA



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forward under a single banner. The responsibility lies with each individual to be educated on the issue and participate in the discussion to make a profession-wide decision. The time is now. Rise to the occasion. ■

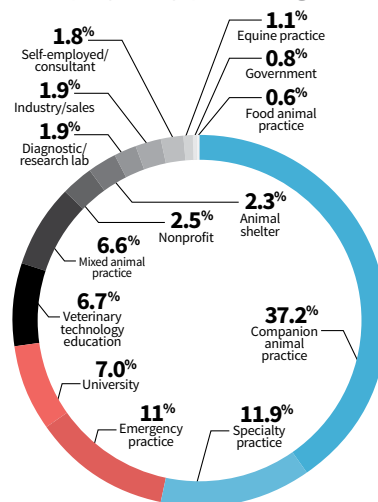
Editor’s note: Kenichiro Yagi and Heather Prendergast cochair the National Credential Task Force.

Reference

1. National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America. *NAVTA 2016 Demographic Survey Results*. http://www.navta.net/?page=Demographic_Survey. Accessed September 13, 2016.

DID YOU KNOW?

Where veterinary nurses are employed by percentage:



Source: NAVTA 2016 Demographic Survey