



A career in Veterinary Practice

The role of veterinary surgeons is protected by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, with certain minor exceptions, only a registered veterinary surgeon is permitted to diagnose and treat the injuries and ailments of animals.

- To practise as veterinary surgeon in the UK you must be registered with The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the governing body of the profession in the United Kingdom
- Veterinary surgeons in general small animal practices work mainly with companion animals such as dogs, cats and other pets
- Other veterinary surgeons work in equine, farm or specialised practices with zoo and exotic animals such as reptiles and birds
- A vital part of their work is the support and education of animal owners
- They form a central part of the veterinary team working alongside veterinary nurses, receptionists, auxiliary staff and veterinary para-professionals.

Key facts

- There are 18,891 practising veterinary surgeons across the UK according to the RCVS Facts (July 2013)
- Career options include: general practice, specialised practice, government service, research, industry, charities and universities
- There are currently over 5,000 veterinary premises spread throughout the UK.

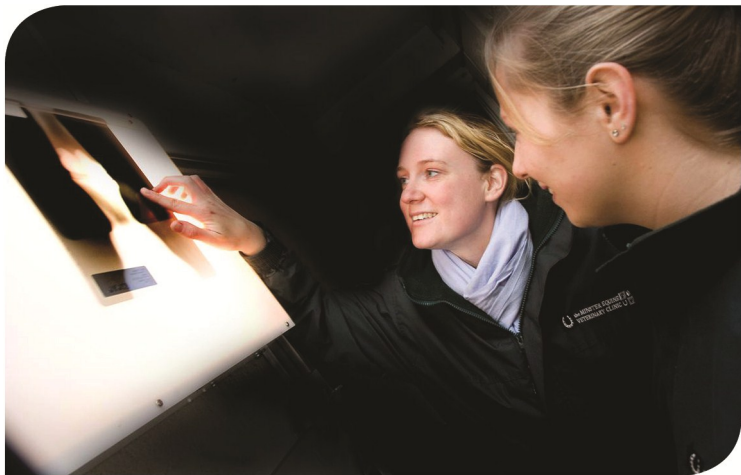
Working life

There is no such thing as an average day or week for a veterinary surgeon as animals require a 24-hour service, 365 days a year.

In general practice working life may include:

- Consulting clinics - seeing clients with their animals
- Treatment of hospitalised animals
- Surgical operations
- Using diagnostic techniques such as radiography (x-rays) and ultrasound
- Taking samples and performing laboratory tests
- Visiting other premises such as stables, farms, kennels and zoos
- Business management and administration
- Working as part of a staff rota, with some weekend and on call duties depending on the practice requirements
- All practices must provide an out-of-hours service, either directly which means nights on call or working with another veterinary practice
- Some practices specialise in providing out-of-hours cover so the work is overnight.





Getting in

To qualify and register as vet in the UK, you will need to study for a veterinary degree at university. There are currently seven universities in the UK offering veterinary degrees approved by the RCVS:

- Bristol
- Edinburgh
- Liverpool
- London (the Royal Veterinary College)
- Cambridge
- Glasgow
- Nottingham

Veterinary degree courses last between five and six years. The entry requirements are A levels and minimum grades of two As and a B in Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Maths. In Scotland and SCE Highers, AAABB grades are required in Chemistry, and two subjects from Biology, Physics or Maths.

Applications need to be submitted via Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Competition is high.

Practical work experience in a range of veterinary practices, farms and even abattoirs is also required.

Did you know?

Veterinary surgeons seek to ensure the health and welfare of animals. They have to fulfil their professional responsibilities by maintaining five principles of practice:

- Professional competence
- Honesty and integrity
- Independence and impartiality
- Client confidentiality and trust
- Professional accountability.

Skills and personal qualities

A strong commitment to the welfare of animals is vital as this profession is very demanding in terms of the physical and mental skills required to provide a professional level of veterinary care.

Equally important are good communication skills, empathy with others and a commitment to life-long learning.

Possible tasks

- Prevention of disease
 - Diagnosis of disease, injury and ailments
 - Medical treatments
 - Sedation, general and regional anaesthesia
 - Surgical treatment of disease and injury
 - Prescribing medications
 - Protecting public health through meat inspection
 - Monitoring animal health
 - Preventing the spread of diseases
 - Communicating with and educating animal owners
- Working as part of the veterinary team alongside veterinary nurses, receptionists and auxiliary staff
- Euthanasia and post-mortem examinations.

Further information

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons website:
www.rcvs.org.uk/education/i-want-to-be-a-vet

Lantra website:
lantra.co.uk/careers

UCAS website: www.ucas.com

