

Qualifying as a veterinary nurse

Once you have successfully completed your qualification and provided evidence of your training, you will be eligible to join the Register of Veterinary Nurses. On entering the Register, you will be awarded a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Certificate in Veterinary Nursing. Your entry to the Register entitles you, by law, to practise as a veterinary nurse under veterinary direction.

What next?

Once qualified, there are plenty of opportunities to develop your career by diversifying into more specialised areas of veterinary or related work, and gaining further qualifications.

As a qualified veterinary nurse you could develop a career:

- as a clinical nurse in general practice
- in a specialised veterinary referral centre
- as a veterinary practice manager
- in academia as a lecturer or researcher
- within the pharmaceutical and veterinary supplies industries



Other useful contacts

The British Veterinary Nursing Association

T 01279 408644
www.bvna.org.uk

Lantra

The Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector

T 0845 707 8007
www.lantra.co.uk

For further information, please contact

RCVS Veterinary Nursing Careers
T 020 7202 0788
E vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk
www.rcvs.org.uk

Ref DV/0913/1



RCVS SETTING
VETERINARY
STANDARDS

Could you be a veterinary nurse?



- Are you interested in animal health and welfare?
- Do you enjoy teamwork?
- Are you a good communicator?
- Would you enjoy practical work in a veterinary surgery?
- Would you like to learn how to provide expert nursing care for animals and support for their owners?

If the answer is yes, veterinary nursing may be for you!

What is veterinary nursing?

Veterinary nursing is the supportive care of animals receiving treatment within a veterinary practice. A veterinary nurse (VN) works as a member of the veterinary team, providing expert nursing care for sick animals. VNs also play a significant role in the education of owners about maintaining the health of their pets. They carry out technical work and are skilled in undertaking a range of diagnostic tests, medical treatments and minor surgical procedures, under veterinary direction.

Which animals do they care for?

All student nurses commence on the same veterinary nursing course and complete the same general core units. Students get the opportunity to specialise later in the programme, taking either small animal, equine or 'mixed' practice units.

Small animal nurses work mainly with cats and dogs but will also learn to care for smaller pets, such as guinea pigs and hamsters, and sometimes more exotic animals, such as snakes and tortoises. Equine nurses mainly work with horses, and nurses in mixed practice work with farm animals and horses, as well as pets.



Entry to training

All veterinary nurse training is conducted through colleges or universities that offer qualifications approved by the RCVS, and their linked veterinary training practices. The RCVS regularly inspects veterinary nurse education programmes to ensure that high standards are maintained.

To start training, you will need to meet minimum entry requirements which will be set by the awarding organisation or institution for your qualification. For further information on entry requirements you should contact your local college or awarding institution for advice.



A list of RCVS approved qualifications in veterinary nursing and colleges is available to download from the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk.

Vocational training

Level 3 Diplomas are offered on either a full-time basis or apprenticeship-style alongside a job in veterinary practice. Upon successful completion of the qualification, you will be able to apply to register with the RCVS.

If you enrol on a full-time course your time will be divided between that spent in the classroom and periods of training on placement (paid or unpaid) in veterinary practice. These placements will be organised by the college for you.

As an apprentice, you will first need to find employment in an approved training practice and then attend college on a part-time or block release basis. You can obtain a list of training practices from www.rcvs.org.uk.

Training is quite intensive and takes between two and three years. A large proportion of this time will be spent gaining clinical experience in a training practice. You will be working under the supervision of qualified veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, learning how to provide nursing care and treatments in a range of different situations. You will be assessed throughout the course via theory exams, practical examinations, a work-based progress log and assignments. You will also be expected to undertake several hours of private study each week.



Higher education

Alternatively, you can take a veterinary nursing degree at university. Universities will have their own entry requirements and you will need to apply via UCAS. Bachelor (BSc) and Foundation (FdSc) degrees are available and courses often include additional subjects, such as practice administration or farm animal care.



Training takes three to four years, depending on the type of course. VN degree courses include a significant proportion of practical training based in approved training practices, alongside an academic programme.

What's best for me?

Vocational and higher education qualifications in veterinary nursing both lead to registration as a VN. If you are very practically-minded, and want to get 'stuck in' to a job in a veterinary practice, vocational training is probably for you.

A degree course will take a little longer, but could lead to additional career opportunities, such as research, the pharmaceutical industry and teaching.

Registering as a student

You should register for an RCVS-approved vocational or degree qualification with your chosen college or university. Your college or university will enrol you with the RCVS as a student VN, which gives a legal dispensation for you to administer certain veterinary treatments to animals under supervision as part of your training.

If you plan to undertake apprenticeship-style training, you must be employed as a student VN at an RCVS approved training practice before you can enrol for training. A list of colleges and approved training practices is available at www.rcvs.org.uk.

You should contact your nearest college for information on the courses available and details of linked practices. You may also approach training practices directly if you are considering apprenticeship-style training.