

About the veterinary practice team



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The veterinary practice team – who's who

The veterinary surgeon

Veterinary surgeons in the UK have to study for at least five years at university to achieve their veterinary degree. This course is intensive and more diverse than that for human medicine.

Only after successfully qualifying can a veterinary surgeon be registered to practise as a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Once they have qualified, all veterinary surgeons continue with further study. Some gain qualifications to allow them to specialise in a specific area of veterinary medicine.

When registering with the RCVS, all veterinary surgeons promise to *'pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that, ABOVE ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care'*.

Many veterinary surgeons also become members of the British Veterinary Association (BVA). This is a voluntary membership organisation which aims to support its members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

The veterinary nurse

Veterinary nurses are a knowledgeable and vital part of the veterinary practice team. Some veterinary practices employ a mixture of nursing staff, including qualified and RCVS-registered nurses, unqualified nursing assistants and student nurses.

By law, RCVS-registered nurses are allowed to carry out minor surgery, some treatments and diagnostic tests under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon.

Nurses play a key role in educating owners and many run their own clinics (for example, puppy parties or obesity clinics) within the practice, to support the usual services

that are available. You can ask your practice whether the veterinary nurses run any extra clinics.

The practice manager

Some veterinary practices have a practice manager to run the business and administration side. Practice managers might also be responsible for staff rotas and other HR issues, practice suppliers and other day-to-day tasks involved with running a practice.

The support staff

Practices may also have laboratory technicians, secretaries, kennel staff, telephonists and receptionists – all of whom play an important role in helping the practice to run smoothly.

Not just for emergencies

The knowledge and skills of veterinary surgeons and their nurses are not just available for emergencies, and their care is not limited to sick animals. Injury and disease are major concerns of course, but so are regular check-ups, guidance, preventative medicine such as vaccinations and even advice before you buy, breed or look after an animal.

Your veterinary surgeon is there to help you care for your pet and make sure it enjoys a good quality of life, and they should be happy to provide advice should you ask for it. Getting to know your veterinary surgeon, your veterinary practice and the team of dedicated professionals who run it, is one of the best things you can do for your pet.

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public