

So you want to be a Veterinary Nurse?

Lindsay Floyd Head Nurse Client Care at Drove Veterinary Hospital answers questions from GCSE pupils.

What is it like to be a veterinary nurse? Is it hard work?

Being a Veterinary nurse is a very varied job. We are able to get really involved with a range of patients and their various ailments. We help support the vets, holding that fractious cat for a blood sample, making sure they don't wake up from their anaesthetic half way through an operation, and ensuring all the equipment is in good working order, as well as making patients feel at home in the practice, and helping support owners through difficult times. We really get to know our patients, especially the ones who stay in for a few days at a time.

The work is often hard, especially if you are working long hours as the day does not stop at 5pm. Overnight is often when we get to see the most varied cases as you never know what is about to walk through the door. However, the varied work keeps us on our toes, and means no two days are ever the same, so is very enjoyable.

What equipment does a veterinary nurse require?

A Veterinary Nurse is often in charge of maintaining all kinds of equipment within the hospital, such as making sure the dental drill is spinning correctly, and that we don't run out of suture material half way through an operation! A nurse will always need a working watch, especially for monitoring heart and breathing rates of animals under general anaesthetic, and a pair of scissors usually come in handy too!

Which are the hardest animals to work with?

We work mainly with cats, dogs, rabbits and rodents. Often the hardest to deal with are scared and fractious cats (because they can be surprisingly spikey when they want to be), and aggressive dogs as one bite from a large dog could do a lot of damage. Veterinary nurses are well trained in animal handling, so thankfully injuries are minimised, but the odd one is inevitable when dealing with such a range of patients.

What sort of animals do you work with?

I work mainly with cats, dogs, rabbits and rodents. We also see the odd 'exotic' pet such as birds and reptiles. We occasionally have wildlife such as deer and badgers brought in, when we work closely with the RSPCA to get them rehabilitated.

What is your average salary ?

Average salary varies widely with location, experience, and the number of hours you work (for example whether you are expected to be on call overnight and at weekends).

What sort of treatments do you offer to animals at your vets?

We offer a range of treatments, broadly categorised into the following:

- Routine healthcare – this includes vaccinations, dental checks and neutering
- Medicine – this can be anything from a course of antibiotic tablets through to chemotherapy for cancer.
- Diagnostics – we are able to perform x-rays and ultrasound scans on patients who require them, for example to diagnose a gut or liver problem.
- Surgery – this really can be anything from a tooth extraction through to removing a sock from a dogs stomach, or fixing a cat with a broken leg. You never know what will walk through the door next!