



# JOB of the Week



**Job name:** Veterinary nurse

**Job description:** Veterinary nurses work in a supportive role carrying out a range of tasks aimed at improving animal health and welfare. Veterinary nurses are one of two key professional roles delivering medical care to animals, the other being veterinary surgeons. To be a veterinary nurse, you'll need to have successfully completed a course accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). As a veterinary nurse, you'll be involved in the hands-on nursing care of a range of animals, providing both emergency and routine healthcare. You'll work alongside veterinary surgeons to promote animal health and welfare through responsible ownership and play a key role in the education of pet owners.

**Tasks you will undertake in the job:** As a veterinary nurse, you'll need to:

- confidently handle and restrain animals
- provide nursing care to hospitalised patients, including patient monitoring and health checking, feeding, grooming and walking animals
- administer treatments including injections, tablets, fluids and blood transfusions
- perform diagnostic tests, e.g. blood sampling, urine analysis and x-rays
- prepare animals for surgery and perform some minor procedures, e.g. suturing wounds and dental hygiene
- monitor anaesthesia
- assist veterinary surgeons with operations
- maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of the practice
- communicate with pet owners, gaining their trust and reassuring them about their animal's treatment
- educate pet owners on animal health, including vaccinations, worming, flea prevention and appropriate nutrition
- support student veterinary nurses undertaking placements
- work to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses.

**Skills required for this job (core competencies):**

Communication	Resilience	Organisation	Teamwork
Problem Solving	Initiative	Creativity	Digital literacy

**Sectors in which Veterinary nurse would normally work:** Every day will bring different challenges but variety is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role. The job is physically demanding. You'll be on your feet for much of the day and will be involved in lifting and restraining animals. Practice hygiene tasks, including disinfecting kennels and sterilising surgical equipment, are an important and integral part of the role. As you're required to be hands-on with a range of animals, bites and scratches are a potential risk. You'll play a key role in supporting pet owners in making (sometimes difficult) decisions regarding their animal's care and wellbeing.

Most veterinary nurses are employed by veterinary practices, which can include private, corporate-owned and charity clinics. There are also specialist employers, providing only emergency care or specialising in referral cases.

Some veterinary nurses work in rescue centres and animal charities. Outside of practice, there are other areas of employment including education, research, animal rehabilitation, and the armed forces.

## Career path and progression within the industry:

It's possible to become a clinical coach within general practice, where you'll help and support student veterinary nurses to develop their clinical skills. You could progress from this into a head nurse role, supporting the development of a whole team of nurses.

There are opportunities to develop your career and specialise depending on the practice that you work in and your interests. For example, within referral practice, you could specialise in a specific type of nursing care, e.g. anaesthesia, rehabilitation, ward care or diagnostics. Alongside the animal-related work, there are also options for you to progress and specialise in a managerial role such as a practice manager.



**Salary:** At entry-level, veterinary nurses can earn £17,793 to £22,300. With up five years' experience salaries range from £20,388 to £23,550. More senior veterinary nurses can earn up to £38,600, with the average salary being around £28,000.



**Working hours:** As a full-time veterinary nurse, you'll work an average of 39 to 49 hours per week.

However, you may work longer hours depending on your role. You should bear in mind that you may be required to work unsociable hours, including weekends, bank holidays and possibly overnight cover.

Part-time and locum (temporary) work is also an option within this profession.

**Essential skills you need to show:** You will need to demonstrate:

- the ability to communicate with pet owners, veterinary surgeons and people from a range of backgrounds
- effective teamworking skills, as you'll be working closely with veterinary surgeons and other professionals when caring for patients
- the ability to work independently and use your own initiative on occasions when you have sole responsibility for patient care, for example out of hours work
- strong attention to detail, particularly when administering medications and monitoring multiple patients
- that you can stay calm and composed in stressful situations, and work well under pressure when dealing with emergencies.

In order to apply for any of the accredited courses to become a veterinary nurse, you'll need to have already completed relevant work experience. This will include spending several weeks in veterinary practice and may involve additional animal related work experience, for example working in a rescue centre. Some courses will allow you to complete your veterinary practice work experience as individual days, whereas others may require week-long blocks. While weekend work experience is beneficial to understanding the role, many courses will not count this towards the pre-application required work experience (look at <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/veterinary-nurse> for more advice)

**This job in the future:** The workforce is projected to grow by 11.6%, creating 1 900 jobs; in the same period, 57% of the workforce is likely to retire, creating 9 200 job opportunities.

[www.icould.com](http://www.icould.com)

[www.successatschool.org](http://www.successatschool.org)

[www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)

[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors)

[www.ucas.com/careers-advice](http://www.ucas.com/careers-advice)

[www.kudos/cascaid.co.uk/#/](http://www.kudos/cascaid.co.uk/#/) (you all have a log on for this service)

[www.careersbox.co.uk](http://www.careersbox.co.uk) (careers videos)

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