

Pursuing a Career in Veterinary Medicine

Profession Overview

Veterinarians play a major role in the health of our society by caring for animals and by using their expertise and education to protect and improve human health as well.

Typical Duties:

- ▶ Examine animals to diagnose their health problems
- ▶ Treat and dress wounds, perform surgery on animals
- ▶ Test for and vaccinate against diseases
- ▶ Operate medical equipment such as x-ray machines
- ▶ Advise animal owners about general care, medical conditions, and treatments
- ▶ Prescribe medication

Veterinarians work in different kinds of environments. Those who care for companion animals may be in a workplace filled with activity and noise while veterinarians who care for farm animals may spend a lot of time outside. If you are a veterinarian working in research, you may spend your workdays in a lab. Veterinarians who work on policy or for a corporation may spend their workdays in an office. Some veterinarians are general practitioners while others specialize in pathology, toxicology, behavior, surgery, internal medicine, and 48 other [distinct veterinary specialties](#). Check out more information about this career [on the Explore Health Careers webpage](#).

Education Programs

Veterinarians must complete a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M. or V.M.D.) degree at an accredited college of veterinary medicine. There are currently 30 colleges with accredited programs in the US, 5 in Canada and 14 abroad. A veterinary medicine program generally takes 4 years to complete and includes classroom, laboratory, and clinical components. Specialties require additional schooling. The American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges provides a free directory of all accredited programs, called [VMSAR](#).

Admission Requirements: Knowledge and Strategies

Work with your faculty advisor and/or a member of [Kenyon's Health Professions Advising Committee \(HPAC\)](#) to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution's individual website for specific requirements. VMCAS provides [a comparison of course prerequisites by program](#) that is a useful starting point. Common course requirements include: general biology, genetics, microbiology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, physics, and statistics. Some programs will require additional courses such as cellular biology, anatomy, physiology, animal nutrition, and public speaking. Individual schools determine how many prerequisites must be completed prior

to applying. Many will allow 1-2 uncompleted classes at the time of application. Vet prerequisites vary widely: planning for specific programs is key! Communicating directly with programs of interest about what courses they will accept to complete their requirements is strongly encouraged.

Gain as much broad exposure to veterinary medicine as possible. Consider job shadowing with veterinarians, working on a farm or volunteering at an animal shelter. Most vet schools require or recommend a minimum number of animal experience or vet supervised hours within the field, with accepted students often reaching over 1,000 hours of experience. Gaining these experiences will mean tracking hours in an organized manner. Programs often like to see these hours occurring in a variety of practice settings, such as with companion animals and then exotic animals, to ensure a wide breadth of exposure to the field.

When you submit an application, remember you will do so through a centralized application site: [Veterinary Medical College Application Service \(VMCAS\)](#). VMCAS typically opens in January of each year, with applications due around September 15, for entry into veterinary school the following fall. Supplemental applications and fees are also required by many vet programs. Applicants who are Texas residents wishing to apply to veterinary schools in Texas will use the [Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service \(TMDSAS\)](#).

Standardized Test

Depending on your programs of interest, you may be preparing and taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Medical School Admission Test (MCAT). However, the vast majority of vet programs no longer require either standardized test. Several programs now require situational judgement exams, such as [CASPer](#).

General Advising Information

- Strive for academic success: Most vet programs have a minimum GPA requirement. For example, the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine has a 3.2 cumulative GPA minimum requirement but an average of a 3.6 for accepted students.
- Build relationships: create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember, such connections can open up opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply. Three letters of recommendation required is common, and some schools specifically ask for science faculty or veterinarians to write letters for candidates.
- Plan financially: there is a cost associated with applying to schools. Costs of attending individual programs also vary widely. AAVMC has developed a [Cost Comparison Tool](#) to help prospective students further develop their financial plan for veterinary school.

Want more information?

Make an appointment with Sara Stasko in the CDO via [Handshake](#) or email stasko1@kenyon.edu. Connect with a faculty advisor on the [Health Professions Advising Committee \(HPAC\)](#).