

The role of the Veterinary Nurse

Veterinary nurses care for animals that are being treated in a veterinary practice. They also help to educate owners on how best to look after their pets. Every day will bring different challenges however the variety is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role for many. The job is physically demanding.

Veterinary Nurses will be on their feet for much of the day (5-6 hours min) and will be involved in lifting and restraining animals, some large, some small and not all compliant! They will clean and disinfect kennels thoroughly (top to bottom) and sterilise surgical equipment. As they are required to be hands-on with a range of animals, bites and scratches are a potential risk. The role requires resilience as veterinary nurses will play a key role in supporting pet owners in making (sometimes difficult) decisions regarding their animal's care and wellbeing including euthanasia.

Other routine roles include

- administering drugs, fluids, blood, anaesthetics and injections
- preparing animals for surgery and perform minor surgical procedures
- holding and monitoring animals during operations
- maintaining, sterilising and laying out surgical equipment
- cleaning up after surgery
- undertaking diagnostic tests(bloods, urinalysis,)
- preparing and sending off laboratory samples
- Patient positioning and taking x-rays
- caring for, exercising and grooming animal 'in-patients'
- giving advice to owners about caring for and breeding animals
- keeping records
- writing and filing reports
- Restrain animals
- Provide nursing care to hospitalised patients ,including patient monitoring ,health checks, feeding, exercising and grooming
- Monitoring anaesthesia
- Educate pet owners on animal health ,including vaccination, worming, flea treatment and nutrition
- Assist the veterinary surgeon during operations

In the words of some of our current Veterinary nursing students –

'A typical day in the life of a student vet nurse is tiring, busy, often messy but also rewarding! My day begins by feeding, cleaning and medicating all the inpatients, who can range from new born kittens to hedgehogs. I prepare theatre for procedures such as castrations, x-rays and ultrasounds, and help the vet run blood tests, place catheters and bandage wriggly patients. I assist during surgery by clipping and scrubbing patients, and have even scrubbed in to hold the intestines during an ex-lap. I monitor patients recovering from surgery and sneak in a few cuddles whenever I can! Cleaning is a large part of the job – both the practice and myself, as it's rare for a day to go by without an excitable puppy peeing on me! I go home exhausted but already looking forward to the following shift.'