



BVNA
British Veterinary
Nursing Association

A career in **VETERINARY NURSING**



Veterinary nursing is a rewarding career that offers variety and daily contact with animals and their owners.

WHAT IS VETERINARY NURSING?

Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) work alongside veterinary surgeons to provide a high standard of care for sick and injured animals. As a qualified RVN, you will be responsible for the welfare, comfort and recovery of animals that may have undergone trauma, surgery or are receiving treatment for medical conditions. You will be trained to a high level to enable you to work in all aspects of the veterinary practice environment from reception through to the operating theatre.

After qualifying, veterinary nurses can work in a variety of practices from small independently owned or large group practices to universities, hospitals and referral centres. Veterinary nurses can also work with a wide variety of species, ranging from domestic pets and exotic species to horses and wildlife.

BECOMING A VETERINARY NURSE

Veterinary nurse training is conducted through colleges or universities that offer qualifications approved by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and their linked veterinary training practices. You can find a full list of approved course providers and approved training practices on the RCVS website www.rcvs.org.uk. You can either undertake Vocational Training or a Higher Education course.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

There are options to train in either small animal, equine or large animal veterinary nursing. Level 3 Diplomas are offered on either a full-time basis or apprenticeship style alongside a job in veterinary practice. You need to have a minimum of five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above which **MUST** include Mathematics, English Language and a Science subject. (Alternative qualifications are sometimes considered.)

You must be employed by an approved veterinary practice to complete vocational training as it is essential that you gain practical experience. You will attend college on a part time or block- release basis.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Alternatively, you can undertake a veterinary nursing degree at university.

Foundation (FdSc) or Bachelor (BSc) Degrees are available and courses often include additional subjects such as practice management or animal behaviour. Training takes between three and four years depending on the type of course you choose. Degree courses include a significant proportion of practical training based in approved training practices alongside an academic programme.



GETTING WORK EXPERIENCE OR FINDING A TRAINING PLACEMENT

Veterinary Nursing is a popular career choice. Demand for work experience and training placements are both high. Many veterinary practices select their student nurses from staff already working in the practice. For this reason you may wish to consider starting as a ward assistant or receptionist, until a training placement becomes available. Gaining work experience is also very competitive and demand often outweighs availability.

Here are some suggestions that may help you:

- Get animal handling experience at rescue centres, stables, pet shops and kennels/catteries.
- Look for accredited free courses online from pet charities and colleges.
- Read news and other industry updates on veterinary sites, for example, the BVNA website. They're a good way to keep up to speed with what's going on.
- Provide a well-written CV to a vet practice, hand-delivered to the Head Nurse if possible.
- Attend College Open days and speak to tutors about opportunities in the local area.
- Talk to your Careers and Guidance Teachers at school.

WHAT COURSE IS BEST FOR ME?

Vocational and higher educational qualifications in veterinary nursing both lead to registration as an RVN. If you are very practically-minded and prefer to work 'hands on' in a veterinary practice, vocational training is probably for you.

A degree course will take a little longer, but could lead to additional career opportunities, such as research, the pharmaceutical industry or teaching. For further information, see the careers pages on www.bvna.org.uk



Photo: Plumpton College

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Once qualified, veterinary nurses will find a rewarding career ahead of them. They may choose to develop an interest in different aspects of animal health, such as behaviour or alternative therapy. They may also choose to further develop their skills by studying one of a number of post qualification courses such as an Advanced Diploma, a BSc Degree or an MSc in Veterinary Nursing. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is mandatory for RVNs with 15 hours a year being required. RVNs may choose to embark on a career in nursing and work in large veterinary hospitals, universities or specialist referral centres. They may also take on a veterinary practice management role or become a pharmaceutical company representative. Many RVNs also elect to follow a career in education and become college tutors and lecturers teaching the next generation of veterinary nurses.



Scan the QR code to visit our careers page.

This leaflet has been produced by The British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), which is the representative body for the veterinary nursing profession in the UK.

If after reading this leaflet, you feel veterinary nursing is the career for you, why not consider joining the BVNA as an Associate Member? Find out more at:

www.bvna.org.uk

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