



# Pre-Veterinary *Advisement*

## Nature of the Work, Earnings and Occupational Outlook

Veterinarians help animals and people live longer, healthier lives and serve society by preventing and treating animal diseases, improving the quality of the environment ensuring the safety of food, controlling diseases transmitted from animals, and advancing medical knowledge. Prospective veterinarians must have good manual dexterity, an affinity for animals and the ability to get along with animal owners. Additionally, they should be able to quickly make decisions in emergencies. There are approximately 86,000 veterinarians practicing in the United States. The majority (69%) of veterinarians are in private or corporate clinical practice (American Veterinary Medicine Association), although significant numbers are involved in preventive medicine, regulatory veterinary medicine, military veterinary medicine, laboratory animal medicine, research and development in industry, and teaching and research in a variety of basic science and clinical disciplines (Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements, 2008).

U.S. veterinary colleges/schools graduate an average of 2,700 students annually. Employment of veterinarians is expected to increase much faster than average for all occupations through the year 2016. In May 2006, the median annual earnings of veterinarians in practice was \$71,990 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 20082009).

## Veterinary Medicine

There are 28 medical colleges/schools accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association in the U.S., 4 in Canada and 8 in other countries. Prospective veterinarians must graduate from a 4-year program at an accredited college of veterinary medicine and obtain a license to practice, which is controlled by each state and provinces.

Veterinary graduates who plan to work with specific types of animals or specialize in a clinical area, such as pathology, surgery, radiology, or laboratory animal medicine, usually complete a 1 year internship. Interns receive a small salary but usually find that their internship experience leads to a higher beginning salary, relative to other starting veterinarians. Veterinarians who seek board certification in a specialty must also complete a 2- to 3- year residency program that provides intensive training in specialties, such as internal medicine, oncology, radiology, surgery, dermatology, anesthesiology, neurology, cardiology, ophthalmology, and exotic small animal medicine.

## Pre-Veterinary Preparation (College)

Most veterinary medical colleges will only consider applicants who have a minimum grade point average (GPA). The required GPA varies by school, from a low of 2.5 to a high of 3.2. Those who receive offers of admission usually have a GPA of 3.5 or better. Any major is appropriate as long as applicants take the required prerequisite courses. The prerequisites for admission vary by veterinary medical college. Many of these colleges do not require a bachelor's degree for admission. However, most of the students admitted have completed an undergraduate program. It is not necessary that a student complete a program specifically labeled "pre-veterinary" or "pre-vet." It is, however, necessary for applicants to complete all prerequisite requirements before enrolling in one of the 28 U.S. or 4 Canadian veterinary medical colleges/schools (Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges).

## ***Testing Requirements***

Standardized test requirements also vary at each school. Applicants must submit test scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), depending on the preference of each college.

## ***Clinical Experience***

Veterinary medical colleges weigh heavily on a candidate's veterinary and animal experience in admissions decisions. Formal experience, such as work with veterinarians or scientists in clinics, agribusiness, research, or in some area of health science, is particularly advantageous. Less formal experience, such as working with animals on a farm or ranch or at a stable or animal shelter, is also helpful. Students must demonstrate ambition and an eagerness to work with animals. Many schools require experience in more than 1 type of animal setting.

### **Course Requirements**

Prerequisite requirements vary significantly from one institution to another. For a complete list of specific veterinary school/college prerequisites, please refer to the Veterinary Medical School Admissions Requirements in the United States and Canada (VMSAR), available for viewing at the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) website: <http://www.aavmc.org>

Listed below are the two Veterinary programs in California:

**The University of California, Davis** (see [www.assist.org](http://www.assist.org) for SAC courses that meet admission requirements)

Application Deadline: October 1 (requires GRE)

Minimum Undergraduate GPA 2.50\*

Veterinary/Animal Experience Complete 180 hours min. to evaluate an application

\*Applicants not meeting minimum GPA can qualify for consideration by having a combined score in the upper 30th percentile on the GRE.

**Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine:** (see <http://www.sac.edu/students/counseling/sacstg/independent.html> for SAC courses that meet admission requirements)

Application Deadline: October 1 (requires GRE or MCAT)

Minimum GPA (Overall, Science and Prerequisite) 2.75

Animal Experience 500 minimum hours

\*Students are required to have a laptop computer at matriculation.

### **Application Information:**

Students should ideally plan to apply between July and September of the year preceding the academic year they wish to enter. Application deadlines range from October 1 January 15. It is wise to apply as early as possible. Twenty-five of the twenty-eight U.S. veterinary colleges/schools along with two Canadian, two Scottish, and one English veterinary institution currently participate in the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS), a standardized, universal application available online.

For more information, please refer to the VMCAS section in the AAVMC web site: <http://www.aavmc.org>.

*3/09 Information courtesy of the CSU, Long Beach Health Professions Advising Office, [www.sascenter.org](http://www.sascenter.org)*