

Career Choices as A Veterinarian

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center
7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714
Ph. 847-647-9325 FAX 847-647-8498
www.nilesanimalhospital.com

There are so many career opportunities to explore once a veterinary degree is obtained. This article, from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), discusses many of the options available. Visit www.avma.org for more details.

Private Practice

Private Practice: that's what most people think of when they think of veterinary medicine, your typical dog-and-cat or horse doctor. In reality though, there is nothing "typical" about private practice. These veterinarians practice all kinds of medicine on every domesticated species (and a few that aren't!), from general wellness exams to major surgery to late-night emergencies, and everything in between.

Private practices come in all shapes and sizes, and accordingly so do the veterinarians who run them. A clinic may be anything from a large animal hospital in a big city with 8 vets and staff to support them, to a single vet in a rural area treating horses out of his/ her truck. The use of technology varies widely; some clinics may have all the "bells and whistles" (ultrasound, endoscopy, otoscope, etc.), while another clinic may get by on just a radiograph (x-ray) machine, or not even that. The vets may also dictate how their practices run. One vet may prefer only to do general medicine and refer more complicated cases or emergencies to a more specialized clinic. Another vet may enjoy doing orthopedic surgery and feel perfectly comfortable doing ligament repairs even though there is a vet school across town with board-certified specialists. If you are the only vet in a rural area, after-hours emergencies and more complicated cases are probably part of the routine. In a larger city, there are often referral hospitals and after-hours emergency clinics to support the smaller practices.

Another thing to remember about private practice is that it is a business. Many vets own their own practice, and that means taking care of finances, hiring and firing staff, and often spending as much time making sure their business is running smoothly (and profitably) as practicing medicine - or hiring someone competent to take care of the business for them! Some vets prefer not to deal with the business side of things; they may join a practice as an associate that is paid a set salary.

Companion Animal Practice

Companion animal (or small animal) practice covers everything from a clinic that treats strictly cats to one that treats just about anything that people consider a pet, up to and including potbellied pigs and pygmy goats! Companion animal practice may not seem too exciting: after all, the majority of the medicine they do is just wellness exams, vaccinations, and spay/ neuter surgeries, right? Maybe, but small animal vets do a little bit of everything. And have you ever stopped to consider just how important those

vaccinations and spay/ neuter surgeries really are? Vaccinations, in particular rabies, are not only a staple of the companion animal vet's practice but are also crucial to public health. There has been only one human death in the U.S. from rabies in decades, and that is due in part to pet vaccination programs. Small animal vets also play an important part in animal population control by educating their clients on the importance of spaying or neutering their pet. Aside from routine care, companion animal practitioners treat any ill patients and perform surgeries such as foreign body removal and orthopedic surgery (although some vets may prefer to refer less routine surgeries to a specialist). Small animal vets also serve as educators; they advise their clients on medical matters but also on nutrition and behavior. Many clinics run obesity or senior-wellness programs, and sometimes a clinic will have a person who is trained in animal behavior on staff to talk to clients about behavioral issues and training their pets.

Large Animal Medicine

In 1980, about 17 percent of veterinarians worked mostly or exclusively with large animals. Today, it's less than 7 percent. But growing populations of people with pets and horses and the complicated nature of managing large herds of farm animals have created more demand for those types of vets. Most large animal veterinarians work strictly with horses or cows, but some also care for various kinds of food animals. These veterinarians usually drive to farms or ranches to provide veterinary services for herds or individual animals. Much of this work involves preventive care to maintain the health of the animals. These veterinarians test for and vaccinate against diseases and consult farm or ranch owners and managers regarding animal production, feeding, and housing issues. They also treat wounds, repair fractures, and perform surgery, including cesarean sections on birthing animals.

Mixed Animal Practice

"Mixed practice" is a sort of catch-all phrase used to designate any practice that can't be strictly classified as small animal or large animal. Traditionally it means that part of the clientele is large animals and part is companion animals, but it can be used to describe a practice that is mixed equine and production animals. As production medicine becomes more of a separate field, mixed practice is becoming predominantly small animal and equine. Sometimes that means one or two vets who do everything, and sometimes it means that one vet is more devoted to running the companion animal side while another focuses on the large animal side. Beyond that, mixed practice differs little from its non-mixed counterparts.

Alternative/Holistic Veterinary Medicine

Holistic veterinarians look at all aspects of a patient, and are open to using a variety of treatments. They often concentrate on nutrition and diet, the environment and lifestyle of the animal, and psychologic state of the animal in the treatment and prevention of disease. While recognizing that the most modern veterinary techniques such as ultrasound, sophisticated laboratory tests, and surgical procedures are necessary in caring for an animal, holistic veterinarians strongly advocate non-conventional therapies as well. What sets them apart from other veterinarians is that they believe that alternative

medicine modalities such as herbal medicine, chiropractic, and others play a significant role in curing an animal.

Non-Traditional/Exotic Animal Veterinary Medicine

So you would like to be a veterinarian, but want to work with species other than dogs, cats, cows and horses. An exotic animal veterinarian is a veterinarian who has undertaken additional training to treat exotic animals. Exotics are roughly defined as species of the animal kingdom other than the most common companion (pet) and farm livestock mammals. Many exotic animals such as ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs, small rodents, etc. are very different in anatomy and physiology than dogs and cats, and require special treatment. Therefore, an aspiring exotic veterinarian must seek out coursework and residencies that are beyond the scope of standard veterinary school.

Relief/Rescue Veterinary Medicine

Did you ever wonder what happened to all of the animals that were victims of Hurricane Katrina? How did pets get back to their owners? Relief/Rescue Veterinary Medicine can mean a number of different things. These veterinarians dedicate their time to helping animals that were abandoned or need medical attention due to hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes and other natural disasters. When Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, veterinarians from all over the world helped thousands of animals seek shelter and proper care. Being a relief veterinarian can also mean traveling all over their county or state from one veterinary clinic to another in order to help clinics in need of a short time veterinarian. If you love to travel, enjoy meeting new people, or just want to save animals who are victims of disasters, relief/rescue veterinary medicine may just be the job for you.

Specialization

When a student graduates from veterinary school and becomes a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), he or she can practice medicine, prescribe medications and do surgery. Many veterinarians enter practice right after veterinary school and work for many years doing just that. Some veterinarians, however, choose to limit their practice to one species or discipline such as dermatology, lab animal medicine, or surgery.

Currently, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recognizes twenty different veterinary specialty organizations. A veterinary specialist must complete extensive post-graduate training (often 5+ years) and pass rigorous board certification exams and a credential review before becoming certified by the specialty organization.

AVMA Recognized Specialties

Anesthesia	Nutrition	Toxicology
Behavior	Ophthalmology	Zoo Medicine
Dentistry	Pathology	
Dermatology	Pharmacology	
Emergency and Critical Care	Poultry Medicine	
Epidemiology	Preventive Medicine	
Internal Medicine	Radiology	
Lab Animal Medicine	Surgery	
Microbiology	Oncology	

Special Behavior

Animal behavior problems are common and one of the biggest reasons that people give up their animals or treat them harshly. There are three groups of specialist that help people who are having behavior problems with their animals: veterinary behaviorists, applied animal behavior consultants and animal trainers.

Veterinary Behaviorists are educated and licensed to diagnose and treat problems in animals, whether they are behavioral or medical. Behaviorists understand medical problems that may be contributing to the behavioral problem of the animal. For example, a dog that is urinating in the house may be doing so not because he has forgotten training. He may also have one of several medical problems that make dogs drink more water (diabetes, kidney disease, Cushing's disease) or he may have a medical problem which makes it difficult to hold his urine (cystitis, nerve problems). A veterinary behaviorist could easily consider these possibilities.

Sometimes behavior modification programs are more effective if combined with drug therapy (tranquilizers, anti-depressants). A veterinary behaviorist, unlike a consultant or trainer, is licensed to prescribe drugs and is familiar with the different medications and their side effects.

Dentistry

As more pet owners take advantage of advances in veterinary medicine for their beloved animals, the demand for dentistry is increasing. Braces, teeth cleaning, tooth reconstruction, root canals, cleft palate surgeries and other dental procedures used to be limited to human beings. But today, more human beings are willing to pay to improve the health and comfort of their pets by taking them to the dentist. And although many private veterinary clinics offer teeth cleanings and other minor dental care, problems such as malocclusions, gum boils, and severe cases of periodontal disease may need to be referred to board-certified veterinary dentists for further medical care.

Dermatology

Animals are very susceptible to multiple types of skin disorders. Since many of the symptoms for these diseases and infectious parasites are similar, knowing the subtle differences takes specialized training. With the thousands of discoveries in dermatology and other fields of veterinary medicine growing, general veterinarians are hard pressed to keep up with such high volumes of information; thus, the need for specialists.

Veterinary dermatology is one of eighteen specialties recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association. And because animal dermatology and animal allergies are so complicated, and require so much training to properly diagnose and treat, primary veterinarians usually refer complicated skin cases to specialists.

Epidemiology

Epidemiology is the science of understanding why some animals get certain diseases and other do not. Epidemiology concentrates on populations, whereas clinical medicine concentrates on the individual. It is believed that diseases are not randomly distributed

throughout a population, but rather that different groups of animals have a higher risk of illness based on their environment, health, habits and genetics.

Epidemiologists are consulted when there are acute diseases that affect a small group of animals. For example, degenerative joint disease (DJD) is prevalent in middle-aged to geriatric dogs (and sometimes in cats). It may also occur in young dogs who suffer from canine hip dysplasia, a common developmental disorder of the hip joint found primarily in the larger breeds and breed mixes.

Statistics such as these could not be made possible without highly trained veterinarians in research and epidemiology.

Internal Medicine

Internal Medicine is primarily dedicated to diseases of the internal systems. Areas typically handled by internists include the nervous system, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, digestive tract, urinary tract, liver and pancreas, endocrine (hormonal) systems, hematology (blood), as well as cancer.

Veterinarians may refer pets to an internist when they encounter problems such as seizures or paralysis, heart failure, coughing or asthma, chronic vomiting or diarrhea, kidney or bladder disease, hepatitis or jaundice, pancreatitis, diabetes, thyroid disorders, anemia, bleeding disorders, and evaluation or chemotherapy of cancer. Most of the time, problems with pets can be handled effectively by a regular veterinarian.

But on occasions when the condition persists, it may be time to consult a veterinary internist. Specialists bring a greater understanding in a particular area of expertise. In addition, the specialist will have equipment not generally available.

Lab Animal Medicine

Laboratory animal medicine is one of the many specialty fields within veterinary medicine that require additional training after receiving a DVM. The main responsibility of a lab animal vet is, of course, to provide veterinary care to research animals. The Laboratory Animal Veterinarian's Mission Statement is: "To ensure excellence in biomedical research, instruction, and testing with the humane and appropriate care and use of animals."

However, the typical lab animal vet does much more than that! They are called on to provide advice to scientists on the best and most humane ways to use animals in research, to ensure that the researchers are complying with local and federal regulations, and to train and educate others. Often lab animal vets will assist scientists with their projects or carry out independent research of their own.

Lab animal vets also face another challenge in the species of animals they work with, as "research animals" can mean anything from mice to primates! This is a challenging and varied field, with many opportunities for growth. Lab animal vets are usually very well-paid, and right now there are many more jobs available than there are vets to fill them.

If you are interested in becoming a lab animal vet, 2-4 additional years of training (at an academic institution or in an industrial setting) are required after graduation from vet school. The American College of Laboratory Veterinarians has information on residency programs and administers board certification exams for lab animal vets.

Microbiology

Did you know that veterinary microbiologists helped discover and explain the causes of Brucellosis in cattle? It is a disease which can be transmitted to humans leading to neurological and cardiac complications if left untreated.

Veterinary microbiologists work with microbial (bacterial, fungal, viral) diseases of domesticated animals, such as livestock, companion animals, poultry, and fish that supply food and other useful products. In addition, microbial diseases of wild animals are also considered if the infections are of interest because of their interrelation with humans (zoonoses) and domestic animals, such as with Brucellosis, or for comparative or other scientific reasons.

Nutrition

Did you know that obesity is the leading cause of Type II Diabetes in dogs? Did you know that a high fiber diet can affect the composition of milk in cows? Many pet owners are unaware of how important the diet of an animal is in determining their health, which is why many veterinarians specialize in nutrition. Some even become board certified veterinary nutritionists. These veterinarians dedicate their time not only to teaching pet owners about animal health, but are also the ones who do the research required to make a diet that fits every animals needs.

Veterinary Ophthalmology

Veterinary ophthalmologists are dedicated to providing the highest possible standard of care to patients with eye diseases. The provision of a high standard of care in veterinary ophthalmology demands not only clinical expertise but a range of technologically advanced and costly instrumentation that is not available to most veterinarians. Ophthalmologists minimize animal and human suffering and preserve vision by understanding, diagnosing and treating diseases like glaucoma, retinal degeneration and corneal disease. They often present their findings at national and international meetings and strive to further disseminate this valuable information by publication in textbooks and veterinary and human ophthalmic journals.

Pathology

Pathology is the study of both diseases and other forms of underlying processes, as well as the study and diagnosis of the structural and functional changes in cells, tissues and organs that underlie disease.

Pathology is a large and diverse field that allows a pathologist to participate and in multiple areas of the field or focus their scope to a specific area. Essential to everyday surgeries, pathologists are responsible for processing and reporting on all specimens generated during a given surgery. They perform microscopic examination for diseases,

and along with medical technologists, process specimens at medical laboratories for interpretations.

Pathologists are also called upon to perform necropsies (autopsy in people, necropsy in animals). Necropsies could be used to either to help solve animal abuse cases, or to determine the cause of death of an animal. Whether involved in research, clinical cases or both, pathologists play a very important role in understanding diseases.

Surgery

Rapid advances in the veterinary profession can make it difficult for veterinarians to remain current with recent developments in techniques and technologies required to manage some of today's complex surgical problems. Possessing the training, expertise and equipment to perform the most demanding procedures, a veterinary surgeon can help the primary care veterinarian provide the best possible care to the patient. Veterinary Surgeons are responsible for the prevention of disease and for the medical and surgical treatment of animals, which include household pets, animals kept in zoos, farm animals, and horses. They combine their knowledge of animal physiology, nutrition and medicine with practical surgical skills to diagnose and treat animals, prescribe medicines, manage anesthesia and radiography, as well as carry out minor and major surgeries.

Oncology

Did you know that cancer accounts for almost half of the deaths of pets over 10 years of age? Types of cancer in pets include skin, breast, head, neck, testicular, abdominal and many others. Each type of cancer requires individual care and may include a combination of treatment therapies such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, cryosurgery (freezing), hyperthermia (heating) or immunotherapy. In some instances, veterinarians may refer pets to a board-certified oncologist (cancer specialist) depending upon the recommended course of treatment.

Toxicology

Toxicology is the study of the adverse effects of chemicals on living organisms. It is the study of symptoms, mechanisms, treatments and detection of poisoning, such as the poisoning of animals. Toxicology is an important field for obvious reasons, and advancements can be rapid. As a toxicologist, your course work might involve studying what sorts of environmental agents lead to cancer, or the effects these agents have on the neurosystem. You might engage in a study of chemical genomics and examine how toxicants affect gene expression. Or you might immerse yourself in drug research and development.

Zoological Medicine

Veterinarians who work in the field of zoological medicine are dedicated to caring for wild animals, in their natural habitat as well as in captivity. Of course the most obvious job they perform is working for a zoo. They serve in zoos as clinicians, treating sick animals and advising on the proper nutrition and environment to make sure the animals stay healthy.

The American College of Zoological Medicine's (ACZM) Mission Statement is: "Zoological medicine is a discipline that integrates principles of ecology, conservation, and veterinary medicine and applies them to wild animals within natural and artificial environments. The American College of Zoological Medicine is dedicated to excellence in furthering the health and well-being of captive and free-ranging wild animals."

Zoo vets do much more than that, though. Many work in conservation doing research or teaching, often for government agencies. Through research on wild animals in their natural environment, they are very involved in discovering new knowledge and advancing the field of zoological medicine. One of the most exciting and challenging problems zoo vets face is working with so many different species. It's impossible to know everything about every species, so they must be constantly learning new information and applying their old knowledge in new ways.

The American College of Zoological Medicine is the accrediting organization for zoo vets. Visit their website at www.aczm.org to learn more about what it takes to become board-certified in Zoological Medicine.

Academic

Veterinarians may have a wide variety of jobs, but they share at least one thing in common: they all started out as veterinary students. And where there are students, there are teachers. Just as the veterinary profession is large and varied, so are careers in the academic field. Veterinarians may teach DVM students at a veterinary school, pre-vet students in general college courses, or vet technician students at a veterinary technology program. The education required also varies with the type and level of the teaching position. While some teachers may have only a DVM, most have a Masters or PhD in their specific area. Full college professors are usually required to have an advanced degree, and clinical faculty at a veterinary teaching hospital are often board certified in one or more specialty areas (this involves several years of training after attaining the DVM degree).

Clinical faculty treat patients, oversee students' cases, and conduct rounds as well as teach classes. Most university professors are also involved in research in addition to their teaching duties (carrying out and publishing research may be a requirement for a professor at a larger university). Some veterinarians working in an academic environment may choose to pursue administrative positions, such as dean of a veterinary school. There are many benefits to working in a college or university environment: good access to resources and information, colleagues with diversified backgrounds and interests, good compensation and excellent benefits. However, most schools are run by a board of directors, which may limit the amount of control you have over curriculum, research, clinical situations, and budget. In hard economic times, many colleges and universities suffer financially and research or other projects must be funded by private grants. If you enjoy helping others and want to influence the future direction of the profession and the next generation of veterinarians, then a career in academics might be for you!

Organized Veterinary Medicine

"Organized veterinary medicine" is a term used to describe groups which deal with veterinary issues. This includes associations such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), state licensing boards, and other state associations. These associations represent vets and their special interests, and they are an important connection to state, local, and federal governments. Other, more focused organizations that employ veterinarians include the American Kennel Club (AKC), National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA), among others. These associations are dedicated to promoting a particular area of veterinary medicine, and often bring together veterinarians, producers, and consumers to discuss common interests. The groups may regulate their specific area and are often involved in politics, lobbying for or against legislation that affects them.

Veterinarians working for these various groups are employed as directors, consultants, journal editors, educators, etc. Most jobs in organized veterinary medicine are indoor jobs that require excellent communication and organization skills, many meetings, and frequent travel. A unique challenge to working for an organization is that you must always remember the official position of your organization, which may occasionally conflict with your own opinions. Working with an organization gives one the opportunity to meet and work with outstanding members of the profession and work on a variety of projects concerning many current issues in veterinary medicine. Although there is usually little contact with animals, a job with an association often allows a veterinarian to influence and implement programs and policies that affect the entire veterinary community.

Industry

Veterinary Medicine is a good-sized profession, and as such there is a large section of industry to support it. This includes pharmaceutical companies, feed companies, drug distributors, and even growing businesses like pet insurance. Veterinarians work in all ranks of these companies as sales people, in research and development, and as top-level executives or even CEOs. Pharmaceutical companies research, develop and market new drugs and vaccines, and veterinarians are often involved in this process as primary researchers or supervisors. Veterinarians also act as salespeople and contacts to clinics, traveling to various places to promote their products, work with practitioners to help them get the products they need, and answering technical questions about the products they sell.

Veterinarians hold administrative jobs for these companies, too. These positions may not always need the science and medicine of a veterinary degree, but the experience of being a practicing vet and working with other veterinarians is invaluable. Some experience in private practice is frequently required before entering into an industry or business job. Industry and business generally pay well, and the hours can be more regular than private practice.

Consulting

A consultant is literally "one who gives professional advice or services" to another, and that's what the consulting business is all about. To be a consultant, all you have to do is have some knowledge or skill that most people don't- and know how to market it. Consequently, consulting can cover any part of the veterinary profession, from business to livestock to surgery to client communications. Consultants usually work in their chosen field for several years before moving to a consulting position. Sometimes consulting is even a sort of retirement for someone who doesn't want the daily hassles of a steady job but still feels they have a great deal to contribute.

A consultant may be hired by a private practice to give general business advice or to help out with a particularly tricky medical case. They may also be hired by people in industry or even outside the veterinary profession entirely to advise people needing veterinary knowledge. A consultant may work for themselves, perhaps with just a home office, or they may work for a large consulting firm. Consultants must spend a lot of time reading and keeping up with their chosen field, talking with clients and others on the phone, and writing. Good communications skills are a necessity.

A common area for consultants is business. Business consultants often work for private practitioners, giving financial, staffing, or communications advice. They may be hired to fix a specific problem or simply to make the practice more efficient and profitable. Business consultants may also travel and give seminars for people from many practices. Another common area for consultants is livestock and production.

Shelter Medicine

Veterinarians in shelter medicine work for humane organizations, including public and private animal shelters, anti-cruelty societies, and rescue organizations. Shelter medicine is not currently a specialty recognized by the AVMA, but is a fast-growing field with unique challenges and rewards. Many people are probably familiar with the concept of an animal shelter or humane society; homeless animals are taken there and then either put up for adoption or euthanized. Because of the large numbers of homeless or unwanted animals and a shortage of space and money, long-term care often cannot be provided. If an ill patient cannot be treated quickly and inexpensively, it must usually be euthanized. The responsibilities of a vet working for a humane society include routine care and vaccinations, spay and neuter surgeries, and euthanasias.

A veterinarian working for a humane organization is often called on to assess behavioral problems, have knowledge of kennel management, and must know about communicable diseases. Aside from the medicine, they frequently work to educate the public about responsible pet ownership, and must have good communication skills for dealing with potential adopters and other visitors to the shelter. Shelters can be government-run or private, and each situation comes with its own challenges. Government shelters may have strict rules and regulations, while private shelters are generally run by a board of directors that may limit the control a veterinarian has over his or her decisions.

Humane societies may employ full-time or part-time veterinarians, and some do not have a dedicated vet on the payroll at all - they contract out their veterinary needs to private practices, or have volunteer veterinarians to assist. Aside from actual clinical positions, veterinarians may serve as the director of an animal shelter or other humane organization. While a career in shelter medicine can be very challenging and may involve performing many euthanasias, it can also be very rewarding to help work towards a solution for the pet overpopulation problem and help animals get a well-deserved second chance at life.

Government

Uniformed Services

Military veterinarians are involved in animal care, public health, and research. Most veterinarians in the military serve in the Army Veterinary Corps, which serves all branches of the military in the United States and overseas. Veterinarians in the Army Vet Corps generally do meat inspection as well as being responsible for the care of any research, military, or government-owned animals and the pets of the service men and women on base.

Veterinarians entering into the Army Vet Corps straight from school will be commissioned as a Captain and will have a three-year obligation. After the first three years, those who continue in the military are encouraged to pursue an advanced degree (often paid for by the military) and/ or become board-certified, and may move to a more research-oriented position. The Army also has programs that will pay 100% of tuition, fess, and books, as well as a monthly stipend during school. The Air Force employs a few veterinarians as public health officers and in research positions. No other branch has veterinarians, although civilian vets and those in the Army serve the Navy, working with marine animals at the U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Animal Health Care.

For more information on becoming a veterinarian in the military, talk to any Army recruiter (or for a more objective point of view, talk to a veterinarian in the Army!). For links to the Army Veterinary Corps or Air Force webpages, see the Career Site Index at www.avma.org.

International Veterinary Medicine/Conservation Medicine

Conservation medicine is an emerging, interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between human and animal health, and environmental conditions. It is also known as ecological medicine, environmental medicine, or medical geology. Many veterinarians in the United States travel to places like Burkina Faso to work on West African Elephant Conservation, Nepal to work on Rabies Control, and many other countries to examine the connections between ecosystems, wild animal species, and humans.

They work alongside researchers and clinicians from diverse disciplines, including microbiologists, pathologists, landscape analysts, marine biologists, toxicologists, epidemiologists, climate biologists, anthropologists, economists, and political scientists. If you are a veterinarian and love to travel the world, international/conservation veterinary medicine may just be the way to enjoy both.

Research

Research veterinarians have been behind some of the greatest advances in medicine and technology over the past century, and will continue to make innovative discoveries into the distant future. Veterinarians have been influential in the development of vaccines and surgical techniques for both humans and animals, and are essential combatants in the fight against disease.

Veterinarians are employed by the government, industry, and private corporations, as well as colleges and universities; all of which offer the opportunity to work in state of the art facilities dedicated to furthering the development of new technologies. Research veterinarians were responsible for the discovery of pathogens that cause diseases such as salmonella, West Nile virus, and avian influenza, and are key players in the fight against hoof and mouth disease, AIDS, and cancer. Veterinarians developed tuberculosis testing in cattle and spinal anesthesia, as well as the earliest methods of organ transplantation and external fixation devices for use in orthopedic medicine.

Research offers the opportunity to play an integral role in everything from perfecting experimental surgeries and techniques to assisting in the fight against bioterrorism. If you want to work at the forefront of human and animal medicine, consider a career as a research veterinarian.

Other Veterinary Careers

Obtaining a doctor of veterinary medicine degree opens the door to an almost endless variety of career opportunities. Veterinary medicine is constantly changing, and many people are attracted to a career in the field because it is so dynamic and offers so many choices. Veterinarians are sent into space by NASA, care for athletes at the Olympic Games, and monitor animal treatment on the film sets of Hollywood. Upon graduation, some veterinarians choose to follow these, or a multitude of other alternative paths, and become employed outside the realm of private practice. Several “unconventional” jobs in the veterinary field are profiled on the AVMA website (www.avam.org), but many do not fit neatly into categories, so they will be listed under the heading “Other.”

The previous discussion was excerpted from an American Veterinary Medical Association Publication.