

What you need to know about becoming a **Veterinarian (DVM or VMD)**

Veterinarians are the primary health care providers for pets, livestock, zoo, sporting and laboratory animals. Some veterinarians also work in research to protect humans from diseases carried by animals and food. Veterinarians working with food animals may be involved in food safety and the monitoring of animals for communicable diseases. Most veterinarians diagnose health problems, administer vaccinations, perform surgeries and educate people on how to care for their animals. They are trained to use a variety of diagnostic equipment, including radiographic and ultrasound machines.

Where do they work?

Veterinarians work in a variety of settings. Most veterinarians work in private practice with household pets, but they can also be found dealing with animal issues surrounding

- Research
- Food safety
- Food animals, like pigs, cows and other livestock
- Food security
- Large animals

Veterinary students complete four years of medical school to become licensed to practice medicine. Licensing requirements vary by state, but all states require prospective veterinarians to complete an accredited veterinary program and to pass the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination. Veterinarians who wish to become board certified complete a three to four-year residency program in one of the 21 recognized specialties, including zoological medicine, sports medicine and rehabilitation, emergency medicine and dentistry. Students are encouraged to pursue an externship opportunity after graduation to have hands-on experience before entering their practice.

Education

Academic requirements include

- Biology (BIO 105 and 106)
- General Chemistry (CHE 110 and 111)
- Organic Chemistry (CHE 210 and 211)
- Physics (PHY 110 and 111)
- English (ENG 110)
- Math (MAT 190 and 150)

Recommended courses include

- Genetics (BIO 200 or 207)
- Microbiology (BIO 232)
- Biochemistry (CHE 310)
- Animal Science/Nutrition

Accepted Student Profile

Veterinary medical school programs have many applicants and are very competitive.

Applicants should have

- High GPAs
- Leadership experience
- Excellent entrance exam scores (GREs)
- Hands-on patient experience
- Experience shadowing a practicing veterinarian
- Previous participation in research

Application

Veterinary schools use a centralized application service to apply for admissions. Official transcripts and recommendation must be submitted through the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS).

Veterinary schools typically require students to take the GRE (Graduate Records Examination). The majority of schools will only require the verbal and quantitative sections. Some school will accept MCAT scores. Check with each school to be certain of what entrance exams need to be taken.

Web Resources

Veterinary Medical College Application Service: aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Veterinary-Medical-College-Application-Service.aspx

Association of American Veterinary Colleges: www.aavmc.org

American Veterinary Association: www.avma.org