

National Veterinary Nursing Awareness Month

- What is a Veterinary Nurse?

By Fiona Mullan BSc Hons RVN VPAC

Unlike Nursing in the medical profession, many members of the public are completely unaware of the vital role that veterinary nurses have in veterinary practice. The month of May brings the arrival of National Veterinary Nursing Awareness month, which aims to change this.



In the same way Nurses work alongside Doctors, Veterinary Nurses work alongside Vets, and no veterinary practice/hospital could function without them. Nor without the fantastic support staff (Receptionists, Kennel assistants etc.) that complete the veterinary team.

As a veterinary nurse you often get asked 'So when do you become a vet?'

This is very disheartening as veterinary nursing is a profession in its own right, and a profession that requires knowledge, skill, and (depending on course provider) up to 4 years intensive training to complete the course and pass the RCVS (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) examinations required to qualify as a Registered Veterinary Nurse.

So what do Veterinary Nurses do?

Each day in veterinary practice is different! One day you might be caring for the hospitalised inpatients — administering medications, providing IV fluid therapy, taking and recording regular observations/vital signs, and recovering animals from anaesthetic or surgery.

The next day you could be in the operating theatre — scrubbed in and assisting the vet with surgical procedures or even doing minor procedures (whilst under vet supervision) such as minor stitch ups, minor lump removal, radiography, dental scale and polishes, or carrying out the vital job of monitoring the animal's cardiovascular and respiratory function whilst they are under anaesthetic.

There will be days where you will be running nurse clinics and involved with client education — doing consultations such as post op checks, bandage/dressing changes, suture removal, dental advice, weight loss clinics, flea and worming clinics or giving general advice and helping out on reception.

There is also a lot of laboratory work — running blood samples, testing urine samples, looking down the microscope, sending samples away to external laboratories and reporting results to the vets.

The list goes on!

Getting started in Veterinary Nursing!

The best way to know if this is the career for you, is to do as much research and work experience as possible! This will give you a real idea of what to expect and an opportunity to ask all your questions.

Further information about the Veterinary Nursing profession can be found at the British Veterinary Nursing Association or RCVS websites.

