



# STRATFORD CAREER INSTITUTE'S GUIDE

— GUIDE TO VETERINARY ASSISTANT TRAINING —

 **STRATFORD**  
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# WHAT DOES A VETERINARY ASSISTANT DO?

Everyone knows what a veterinarian does; they take care of animals. Some specialize in taking care of domesticated animals. Others specialize in taking care of exotic animals or working or competition animals. A veterinarian is tasked with knowing how to medically care for a wide variety of animals. This is more difficult than it sounds. Unlike you or I, an animal is incapable of saying ‘the pain is in my stomach right here.’

A veterinary assistant is there to assist the veterinarian in treatment. They will work under the direction of either the veterinarian or the veterinary technician, and they are there to do a variety of tasks that make it easier for their superiors, the veterinarian, and veterinary technician.

## Here are a few tasks that a veterinary assistant will commonly perform:

### Keeping Animals Secure

When animals come to the vet’s office, they may not react well. Some animals do not want to sit still, some will react defensively, some just won’t cooperate at all. A veterinary assistant will spend a lot of their time, especially early on in their career, holding down animals while they’re given shots, while blood is being drawn, while they’re being force-fed medication, things like that.

### Weighing Animals

Almost any trip to the vet starts with finding out if your animal is gaining or losing weight, and figuring out if they’re on target for their species and breed as far as their weight. If you’ve spent any time in your local vet’s office, you may have seen that it’s a struggle to get dogs, cats, and other animals to stay still on the weight long enough to be able to get an accurate measurement. This is where a veterinary assistant comes in, to make sure that the weight is right and accurate.

### Washing Animals

Some animals that come to a vet’s office need a wash before a procedure. If the animal is going to be undergoing some sort of surgery, it may need a wash before they can perform the surgery (as well as a shave of the area the surgery will take place upon). In some veterinary offices, it is standard to wash a pet if they’re going to be there for any length of time, and that is the work of a veterinary assistant.

### Drawing Blood And Collecting Samples

Because a pet cannot tell you what is wrong with them, diagnosis of many issues is reliant upon the drawing of blood and the collection of urine or stool samples. That means that when a pet comes in, the veterinary assistant will need to draw blood for testing, and may even need to wait for the animal to produce a stool sample for later testing.

This is not glamorous, but it is important to make sure that the animal can receive an accurate diagnosis and proper treatment.

## Administering Medicine and Vaccinations

Most of the time, a veterinary technician will administer vaccinations. Many vets try to avoid administering them because it has a negative impact on their interaction with their animal patients. Sometimes, that duty will fall to a veterinary assistant.

As far as administering medicine goes, it is often a much simpler process. Get the animal to consume medication, often hidden in food, and you've given them their first dose of medicine treating their issues.

This list is just some of the most common tasks a veterinary assistant will perform. If you're interested in that kind of work, and if you have a love for animals that can survive having to draw blood and collect their stool samples, then you may want to consider a correspondence course to help you kickstart your career as a veterinary assistant.

## Tech vs. Assistant

It is important to note the difference between vet techs and vet assistants. Most states have certification requirements for techs, whereas assistants can work without one. That's why Stratford's distance learning course is perfect for those who want to get their feet wet in the veterinary field by becoming an assistant.

# WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A VETERINARY ASSISTANT?

## Education Requirements for Veterinary Assistants

If you're here reading this, chances are good that you're an animal lover. This is the first and most crucial step towards a career in veterinary sciences. For most people interested in getting into the field, the role of vet assistant fits well. As a veterinary assistant, your duties will largely be centered around supporting veterinary technicians and veterinarians.

Today, we're going to learn a little bit about the position of vet assistant, and we'll review the education that could successfully land a job.

*Let's get started!*

### Vet Tech vs. Vet Assistant

It is a common misconception that a vet tech and a vet assistant is the same position. In reality, the roles are distinct, though related. Both a tech and assistant might work in a veterinarian's office or in an animal hospital. Technicians generally perform high-level tasks such as medical tests and administering limited medical care. Because of this level of duty, more training is required. Usually the expectation is that a tech will have a specialized certification that qualifies them for these tasks.

On the other hand, veterinary assistants focus on more basic tasks and day-to-day activities to support the technicians and the veterinarian. Now that we've provided some clarification, let's examine the types of duties you might expect as an assistant.

### Educational Requirements

It's famously said, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Over the course of decades, a small business begun in a garage became Apple computers, but patience plays an important role in leading a business through that building process. Patience also helps with knowing when to act and when to wait.

Now to answer the question at hand – what type of education will you need to become a veterinary assistant?

### Vet Assistant Education Requirements

You might be relieved to learn that becoming a veterinary assistant typically only requires a high school diploma or GED. However, if you want to make yourself an attractive candidate to veterinary offices and animal hospitals, it's a good idea to seek out more training.

So what kind of education should you focus on if you're trying to make yourself a more attractive candidate?

First of all, if you're still in high school, you can select courses like biology and chemistry that will give you a solid background in the basic sciences used in practice. If you've already graduated, it wouldn't hurt to brush up on some of the basics – the internet is a fantastic resource for that.

Second, you really should consider extended training that will provide you with a solid knowledge base in the field. There are many programs that can equip you with the skills and understanding you need to be an excellent veterinary assistant.

Third, accepting a volunteering or internship position is generally a good idea. Though the vet may not pay you, you'll gain valuable real-world experience. You'll also be able to network and develop professional contacts at this time. In many cases, an internship or volunteering position can lead to a permanent job at the clinic or hospital.

It is important to note that many vet techs and even veterinarians started out in the position you're considering working towards. You'll learn valuable information and may decide to attend a 2-year or 4-year program to advance your career further. If your long-term goal is to become a veterinarian, starting out as an assistant is a fantastic idea.

You cannot make the decision as to whether or not this is the right career for you overnight. Take your time, consider all the facts, and really think about whether or not this is the type of career you'd like. If and when your answer is a firm "yes," you can start taking the steps necessary towards an awesomely rewarding career.

# ARE VETERINARY ASSISTANTS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE FROM A NAVTA-APPROVED PROGRAM?

The field of veterinarian medicine is vast and has several different levels of training, experience and job titles. A veterinary assistant is one of these job titles, and you can get training even in high school. However, many veterinary assistants choose to get their training through a distance learning course. You don't need to graduate from a NAVTA approved program, but it's always an option should you choose to go that route.

## What Does a Veterinary Assistant Do?

There is a difference between a veterinary technician and a veterinary assistant. A veterinary technician is a step up from an assistant in that they are the nurses or lab technicians in a veterinarian environment. They have official training and licensing from a qualified provider.

An assistant is the starting point for any applicant who wants to get into the world of veterinary medicine. You don't need any licensing and training is at a beginner level. You still need some kind of training unless you are fortunate enough to get training on the job by a qualified veterinarian. An online distance course can be a good starting point for someone who wants to get into veterinarian medicine but doesn't have the qualifications or experience to get their foot in the door.

## Training and Courses

NAVTA has recently released a program for veterinary assistants, but it's not necessary to get into the field. It's a good option, but a distance learning class can give you the same type of training that you need to work in the field.

A veterinary assistant should expect to do low-level jobs to get them acquainted with the veterinary environment and what needs to be done to care for the pets.

You can expect to assist a technician and a veterinarian in a variety of duties. You can help groom the pets, assist the veterinarian during examinations, and walk them if the veterinarian's office has any type of boarding. You might be responsible for sterilizing equipment and assisting during surgical procedures or emergency situations when the pet must be revived.

An online distance learning course gives you the basics so that you can start learning on the job. This training is much more valuable in the field than applying to veterinary assistant positions with no experience and no training.

If you love animals and want to get into the field, an online distance learning course is a small commitment and upfront effort to get started. It's one field that has a promising future since you can move up into other, more advanced positions as you gain training and educational experience. This career is almost always in demand, and you can get a head start with an online course.

# HOW TO BECOME A VETERINARY ASSISTANT

Working with animals is a dream for many people, and working in a veterinary office is a great way to work with animals while earning money.

But what do you have to do to attain a career as a veterinary assistant? What can you do to make sure that you will get the position that you are attempting to get? Well, if you truly wish to become a veterinary assistant, there are a few steps to the process, and a few things you can do that could make you a more attractive candidate for anyone looking to hire a veterinary assistant.

## Have A Love For Animals

If you enjoy your work, you never work a day in your life. Well, if you love to work with animals, it makes a job where you work with them for pay much more fun. If you don't like animals, or you don't like the unpredictability of them, you're probably going to hate the job. Having a love for animals also makes it much easier for you to show them the proper care and compassion, and as caring for the animals at the veterinary office is usually the task of an assistant, it is essential to making the process easier for you.

A love for animals will also help to propel you through the not-so-pleasant tasks that your veterinarian is likely to require of you. Tasks like holding the animal down while they need their blood drawn, or collecting stool samples, or walking the dogs while they're in the care of the office.

## Get A Basic Education On The Tasks

Veterinary assistants are not expected to be experts, but they are expected to have some basic knowledge about dealing with the animals in their care. If you're looking to get a job as a veterinary assistant, you are going to want to take a course, such as the one offered at Stratford Career Institute, to help equip you with the basic information you'll need for the job.

In some cases, you can get this basic training elsewhere, or even on the job, but if you're applying for a job at a veterinarian's office, they are more likely to consider you for the position if you have some training. Correspondence and distance-learning courses are great for learning how to be a veterinary assistant, and learning the skills needed on your own schedule and at your own pace.

## Volunteer!

There are few things that look better on a resume than volunteer work. When it comes to the veterinary work, there are ample opportunities to volunteer and take care of animals. Go down to your local ASPCA or animal shelter, and they're likely to take you on as a volunteer immediately. You can also work at the city pound, assuming that your city still maintains a pound (some cities do not), which will help you accrue experience on-the-job.

## Find A Local Veterinary Office You'd Like To Work For

Now that you've decided on this career path for yourself, you should begin to apply to local veterinary offices where you would like to work. Although you may have a preference as to where you work, you are going to

want to apply at different locations, just in case. Having multiple job offers allows you to pick the one you like best, as well as improving your ability to negotiate on hours, pay, and more.

Now that you've set off on a journey to be a veterinary assistant, you're likely to spend long hours with animals. But if you love animals, you will always find reward in this work.

# WHAT DOES VETERINARY TRAINING CONSIST OF?

If you want to be a veterinary assistant, you're still going to need some training. Depending on the job you're looking to get, you can either get this training while on the job, or you can get the training via your own efforts.

However, wherever you receive this necessary training, you're going to want to ensure that it covers a few basic facets. This knowledge will help enable you to better understand animals, as well as the tasks that a veterinary assistant is likely to encounter during their work.

Without further ado, here are a few things you will want to learn in your veterinary training before you begin to seek work as an assistant.

## An Understanding of Relations Between Humans and Animals

If you're going to be working with animals, and especially if you're going to be working with young animals, you're going to need an understanding of how they interact and socialize. You will also want an understanding of how to get them to properly socialize with humans, other similar pets, and even other species common to the area.

An animal that has gone through proper socialization is not afraid of other animals, nor does it show unnecessary aggression toward them. An animal that didn't get this proper socialization, especially as a puppy, is more likely to exhibit these unwanted behaviors. If you plan to work with animals for any amount of time, understanding how they socialize is very important.

## The Basics Of Animal Biology

Any good training for someone looking to work in a veterinary field will include understanding the basics of animal biology. This includes understanding terminology common in the field, as well as the generalities of the way that animal bodies are designed and function, such as the skeletal and the circulatory system.

Understanding the basics of how animal bodies function will help you to better identify what may be wrong with animals. Animals cannot tell us what is wrong with them, so it's important to be able to understand their bodies and what is going on with them.

## Animal Anatomy and In-Depth Physiology

This is simply a more in-depth study of the systems of organs and cells that help animals to live and function. As with understanding basic animal biology, it is important because animals cannot tell you what part of them hurts or is not working, so you must be able to discern this answer from an understanding of the animal's biology.

## Training for Tasks Particular to Small, Large, and Exotic Animal Practices

Not all animals are created equal, and understanding the process of taking care of a house pet such as a dog is a much different set of skills than taking care of a lion. Being able to understand the difference in care, and in best practices concerning the process of providing them care, is important, not just for making you more

employable. It is also important for making sure that you don't end up on the news after being mauled by an exotic animal.

As a general rule, 'small' animals are those that are kept as pets, such as dogs, cats, lizards, and the like. 'Large' animals include most animals kept as cattle; pigs, horses, cows, goats, and similar animals, basically anything that you expect to find on a farm. Exotic animals, obviously, are anything that is not from the area, including snakes, ferrets, rabbits, and guinea pigs. Wild animals, usually thought of in association with exotic animals, includes animals like wolves, coyotes, dingos, and wild cats.

Though it may be difficult to find somewhere to learn these skills, it is important that you understand these concepts before, or shortly after, finding work in a veterinary field. If you're looking to learn these skills, distance learning classes, such as those available at Stratford Career Institute, will be able to help you learn them at your own pace and very affordable prices.

# IS A DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR VET ASSISTANT TRAINING?

Veterinary assistant training can be a difficult thing to tackle for many, and it can also be hard to make it work with your schedule. Classes are expensive and depending on your life and what time you have free, they are troublesome for those with busy lives, kids, or other considerations that may take precedence.

For many, distance learning programs may be a much better option than having to re-organize life around classes. There are many different reasons that looking at distance learning can help you to get your new dream career off the ground, and do so better than taking classes at a local community college or another school.

## Set Your Own Schedule!

The first great advantage to education via distance learning is that it allows you to set your own schedule. If you go to apply for a class at an actual physical school, they are going to tell you when to be there. Did you miss a class because you're sick, or because your kids had a medical emergency, or even because you took a mental health day and went to a movie and dinner? Too bad, the class is when the class is, and missing the class means that you don't get that information that you will likely need.

But with distance learning, you can take that break, or take a day off because you're sick, or even take a day off because you've had a hard week and you deserve a night out. You are learning when you have the time to learn, and that means that not only can the schedule fit your own, but that the schedule can be modified as your life demands, without the need to clear it with some teacher or authority.

This also means that when you do sit down to do classwork, you are going to be able to better focus on it, because you've chosen the time that is best for you. Fewer distractions and worries can lead to more effective learning.

## Learn At Your Own Speed

Taking classes with other people can be challenging, especially if you're either far behind or ahead of the class. Sitting through a class discussing something that you don't have a grasp of is a terrible experience that can make you feel like you're not smart enough to be there. Many classes also build on the concepts taught in the days before, so if you fail to properly grasp these concepts, you end up behind the class, and you may never be able to catch up!

On the other hand, if you are having to slow down in order to accommodate people in your class who are not able to grasp the concepts, you're wasting time, and that can be just as frustrating. It also can slow down the class, meaning there may not be time to go over more complex concepts, or some things may be left out in their entirety.

## Learn In Comfort

Sitting in a classroom is a difficult place to learn for some. You have to sit in an uncomfortable chair, you have to take the class with people you don't know, and you may end up in a class with people you just cannot stand. If you're a social person, this may be more fun for you.

For everyone else, learning at home is much simpler and more comfortable. You can sit on your comfortable couch, you can wear whatever you like, you don't have to sit in the same place the whole time, and you can get up to use the restroom or to get something to eat without worrying that the teacher is going to take offense. It's a much more comfortable way to learn, and the more comfortable you are, the better you might learn.

That's not to say that there aren't a few downsides to veterinary assistant training on the internet. You will never find the internet to be as useful as hands-on instruction that involves living, breathing animals. However, the benefits of distance learning via an organization like Stratford Career Institute, for many, can often outweigh the negatives.

