

# LESSON 1: BUILDING THE VETERINARY PRACTICE TEAM

## INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, you'll learn about the members needed to make up the veterinary team. You'll get an overview of the receptionist team and their various responsibilities. You'll learn about team leadership, management styles, delegation, and the importance of team members. You'll see how social and ethical decisions influence the veterinary practice. Finally, you'll review the human resources considerations of the veterinary practice.

## SECTION 1.1: VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM

Read the following section. Then read Chapter 1 in your textbook.

### *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to list the positions in a veterinary practice and the typical duties for each position.

The veterinary healthcare team should share in the goal of providing the gold standard of care to each patient, excel at customer service to all clients, while at the same time keeping the working environment safe and personable. This requires a full team effort. One or two people in the practice can't manage this goal on their own.

The veterinary team may consist of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants, veterinary technologists, kennel assistants, groomers, receptionists, office and/or practice managers, and hospital administrators. Each member plays an important, but different, role which the practice defines in the employee manual.

## The Team

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The following passages define the members of the veterinary team. You'll also see the education and training requirements for each position, as well as the licensing requirements for positions that require certification.

## Veterinarians

*Veterinarians* are the only team members permitted to diagnose, treat, prescribe, and perform surgery. They must graduate from an accredited American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) college, pass state boards, obtain continuing education (CE) hours, and hold a current license in the state where they practice.

## Certified/Registered/Licensed Veterinary Technicians

*Veterinary technicians* must be graduates of an AVMA accredited school, pass the state/national exam, and obtain CE hours. The duties of a technician most commonly include patient care, lab work, radiography, client education, and various supervised procedures.

## Veterinary Assistants

*Veterinary assistants* may be trained on the job, or they may attend a school program. This position often includes client education, patient care, laboratory procedures, and assisting the veterinarian and the technicians. Veterinary assistants may earn the title of Approved Veterinary Assistant (AVA) through a National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) approved program and test.

## Veterinary Technologists

*Veterinary technologists* are either graduates of an AVMA approved four-year Bachelor of Science program in Veterinary Technology, or hold an associate's degree in veterinary technology in conjunction with a bachelor's degree in a program such as business, management, or health science. They may hold teaching positions or work as head veterinary technicians.

## Veterinary Technician Specialists

*Veterinary technician specialists* have graduated from an AVMA accredited two-year program and accumulated additional hours in a particular specialty. Their work will depend on the area they specialize in.

## Kennel Assistants

*Kennel assistants* are generally trained on the job. Their responsibilities include keeping the kennels clean and helping prevent the spread of diseases, attending to patients, and alerting someone if a patient needs medical attention.

## Groomers

*Groomers* may attend classes or obtain on-the-job training. Aside from bathing and grooming patients, groomers are often the first to detect skin, ear, and anal gland issues with patients.

## Receptionists

*Receptionists* receive on-the-job training. As the “face” of the practice, the responsibilities of this position may include client care, invoicing, communication, client education, proper phone etiquette, and more.

## Office Manager

*Office managers* excel in customer service and client communications; they manage the front office staff and accounts receivable. An office manager usually has a business background.

## Practice Manager

*Practice managers* generally have a two- or four-year degree and may have completed the requirements to become a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager (CVPM). They’re well versed in all areas of the veterinary practice and excel in client/personnel concerns, training, developing protocols, and initiating and implementing change.

## Hospital Administrator

*Hospital administrators* may also hold veterinary, veterinary technician, or manager positions. Administrators have authority over budgets, purchasing, and creating organizational structure. They understand all the veterinary team positions and advise or establish protocols within the practice.

## Continuing Education

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Several of the veterinary positions require continuing education hours so team members continue to grow in their profession. Continuing education experiences should be offered to everyone, not just those who must fulfill a requirement. A practice that encourages new ideas, education, and training to all staff is on the right track to establishing or maintaining a positive and successful practice. Team members who develop a greater understanding of the practice and veterinary medicine have more to offer clients and increase their skill in patient care.

Options to obtain CE hours include manufacturer/distributor seminars, colleges, the national and state veterinary technician organizations, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Animal Hospital Association, as well as a variety of online opportunities.

The following organizations offer online CE opportunities:

Veterinary Support Personnel Network (VSPN)	<a href="http://www.vspn.org">www.vspn.org</a>
Vet Med Team	<a href="http://www.vetmedteam.com">www.vetmedteam.com</a>
AVMA	<a href="http://www.avma.org">www.avma.org</a>
AAHA	<a href="http://www.aaha.org">www.aaha.org</a>
NAVTA	<a href="http://www.navta.net">www.navta.net</a>

## Veterinary Practice and the Law

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Veterinary technicians are credentialed after passing a state or national exam, but often their roles aren't clearly defined. Each state determines which tasks are appropriate for a technician to perform. However, this description varies greatly from one state to another. Some states don't have any clearly written guidelines, and allow veterinarians to delegate tasks to technicians under their supervision.

Technicians are responsible for recognizing their roles based on the state where they obtained certification. A few states still don't require any certification. However, technicians must always follow the guidelines of the state in which they're certified, even if they work in a state with no requirements, technicians who perform tasks that aren't permitted in their state of credentialing may lose their credential. Their credential may also be revoked if they don't obtain the required number of CE hours, suffer with drug abuse, or due to other forms of misconduct.

At the end of each chapter of your textbook (except for chapter 24), you'll find a series of Review Questions. These questions reinforce the material you've read. You're not required to submit your answers to the school; they're for your own benefit. You can find the answers to the Review Questions in the Answers to Review Questions supplement on your student portal.

Complete the Review Questions for Chapter 1 now.



# Self-Check 1.1

At the end of each section of *Front Office Management for the Veterinary Team*, you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you've just read by completing a Self-Check exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete "Self-Check 1.1" now.

Fill in the blank.

1. Technicians must graduate from a/an \_\_\_\_\_ approved veterinary technology program.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ is considered the "face" of the veterinary practice.
3. The only members of the veterinary team who are allowed to diagnose, prescribe medications for, and perform surgery on patients are the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Office managers must develop \_\_\_\_\_ to handle angry clients.
5. Veterinary assistants may be titled Approved Veterinary Assistants (AVA) if they qualify through the completion of a/an \_\_\_\_\_ approved program and complete an examination.
6. Veterinary technicians must graduate from a/an \_\_\_\_\_ -year program.
7. Practice managers may earn the title of \_\_\_\_\_ Veterinary Practice Manager.
8. Veterinary technicians and veterinarians are required to obtain a specific number of \_\_\_\_\_ hours to maintain their license.
9. The roles each team member plays in the practice are defined in the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The entire veterinary team should play a role in providing the \_\_\_\_\_ of care for each patient.

(Continued)



# Self-Check 1.1

**Respond to the following based on your reading.**

11. What are the requirements to become a practicing veterinarian?
12. What's required to be become a Veterinary Technician Specialist (VTS)?
13. Why should a practice offer continuing education to all team members?
14. What options are available to obtain continuing education?
15. Why does it matter from which state a veterinary technician has his or her credential?

**Check your answers with those at the end of this study guide.**

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