



GUIDE

What to Know About
**Penn Foster's
Vet Tech Externships**

*Get Real, Hands-On Vet Experience
While You Learn*



Written by
Laura Amendola

Table of Contents

- 1** Introduction
- 2** What is an Externship
- 3** Penn Foster Vet Tech Externships At-A-Glance
- 5** How Externships Work
- 7** Why Externships Matter
- 8** Real Student Experience
- 9** Frequently Asked Questions
- 11** Conclusion

Introduction

Interested in Penn Foster's Veterinary Technician Program but are apprehensive about the externships? Aren't even sure what an externship is?

Take a deep dive into all things externship in this informative ebook.



What is an Externship?

An externship is the point in your training where you get to gain in-person, hands-on experience and skills by putting the knowledge you learned into action.

In the Penn Foster Veterinary Technician Program, there are **two required externships** where you'll have the opportunity to work in real veterinary settings with living, breathing animals.

An externship can be a great opportunity to network and potentially obtain employment after completion of your training.



2

Required
Externships



350

Total Hours



77

Skills
Completed



Penn Foster Vet Tech Externships At-A-Glance

Externship 1

- ✓ Takes place at the end of semester **2**
- ✓ **150** required hours (about **10** weeks)
- ✓ **29** Skills focused on foundational animal care techniques on dogs and cats

Externship 2

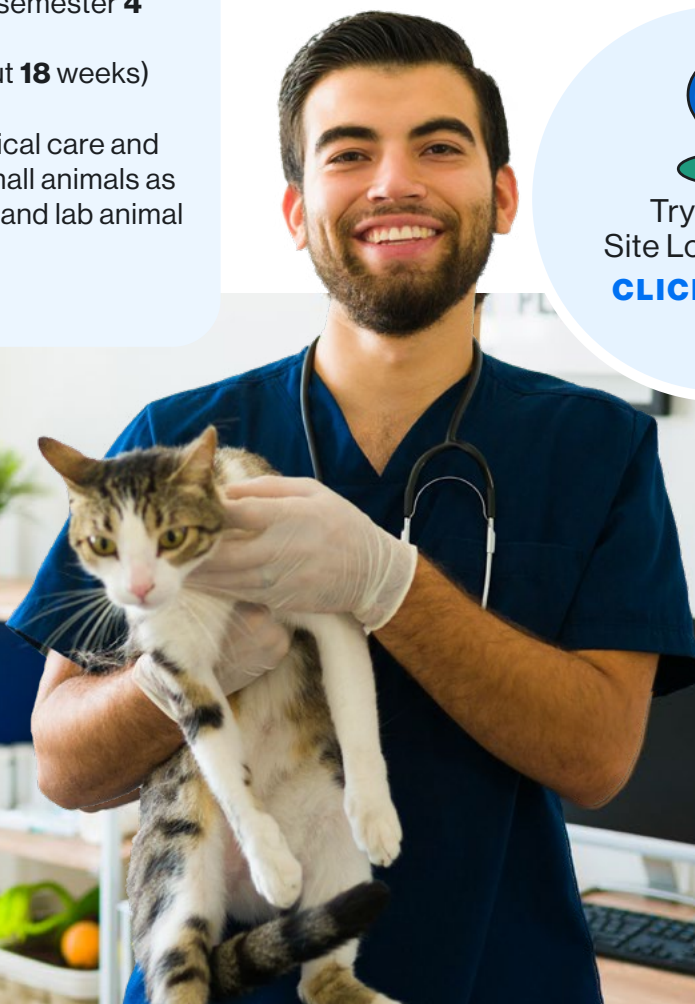
- ✓ Takes place at the end of semester **4**
- ✓ **200** required hours (about **18** weeks)
- ✓ **48** Skills focused on surgical care and imaging techniques on small animals as well as basic large, exotic and lab animal care techniques

Both externships **must** be completed in person. **Students are responsible for finding their own externship site for each externship**, but Penn Foster offers a helpful Site Locator tool as well as a supportive externship team, including an assigned mentor to support the student as they progress through the process.

Site(s) must be approved by Penn Foster and meet AVMA standards before a student can begin their externship.



Try out the
Site Locator tool!
CLICK HERE ➔



Penn Foster Vet Tech Externships At-A-Glance *(continued)*

Types of externship sites:

-  Veterinary clinics
-  Mixed animal clinics
-  Teaching farms
-  Veterinary hospitals
-  Large animal Fast Track Labs
-  Mobile or ambulatory large animal veterinarians

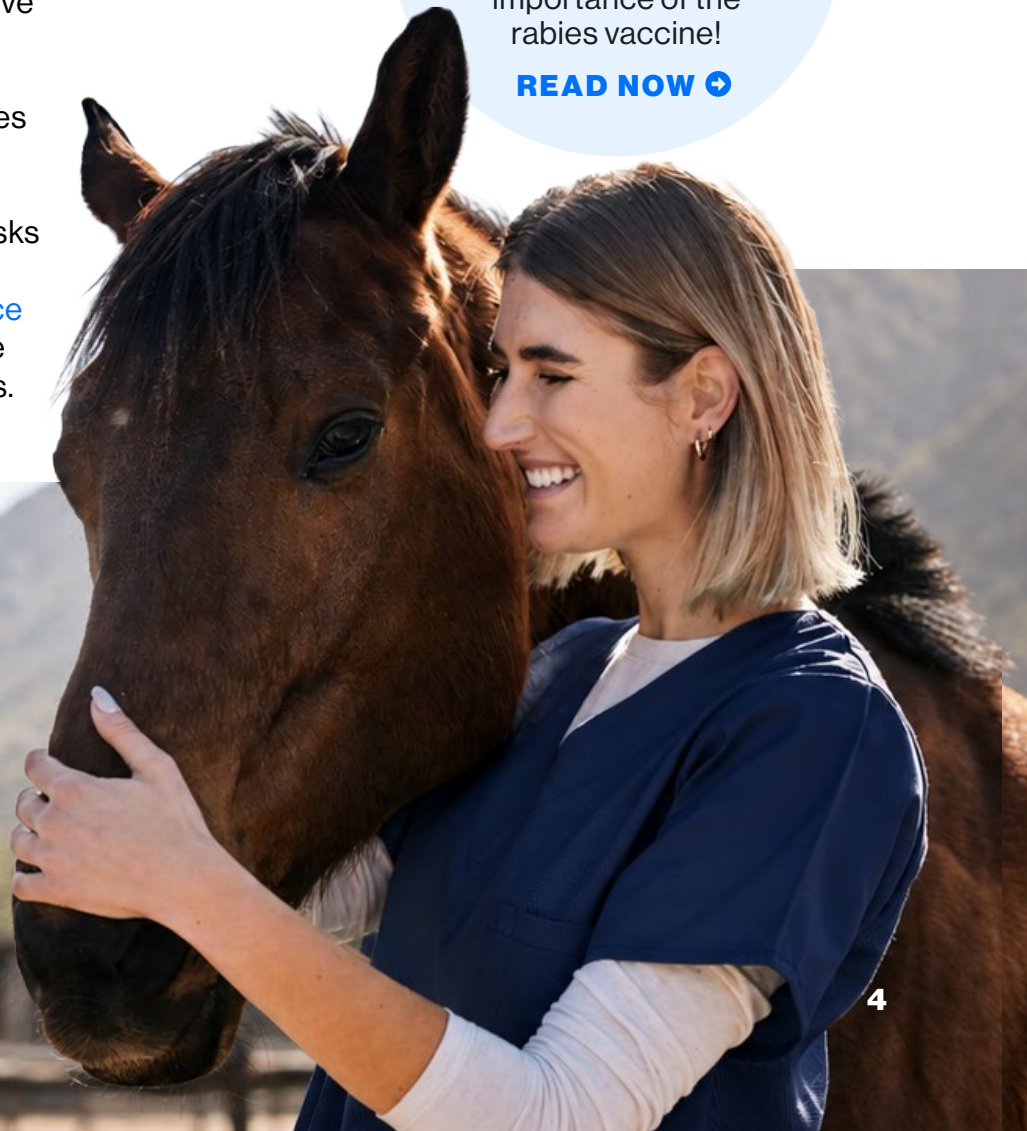
Prerequisites for your externships:

- ✓ Health insurance
- ✓ A rabies vaccine OR a signed waiver stating they understand the risk and agree not to work with patients of unknown vaccine status
 - Students and prospective students are advised to review the program's health and safety policies located in the [student catalog](#) to help inform them of occupational risks to zoonotic diseases as well as rabies [prevalence in the region](#) they will be performing clinical skills.



Check out this blog to learn about the importance of the rabies vaccine!

[READ NOW](#) ➔



How Externships Work

Once you find a site, submit your paperwork, and get it approved, you'll be able to get started completing the required skills for your externship. Each student is assigned a mentor for their externship who will be available when you need help as you begin the process and move through your externships.

Your site(s) must be able to support all the skills you'll be working on and have all the equipment you'll need. Due to the different kinds of animals you'll be working with in each externship as well as the different equipment you'll be using, you may need to find additional sites to complete Externship 2.

In both externships, you will:

- ✓ Assist with animal care and handling
- ✓ Support routine procedures
- ✓ Communicate with veterinary teams and pet owners
- ✓ Practice essential clinical skills
- ✓ Contribute to the day-to-day workflow of a vet clinic

Curious about the kinds of animals you'll get to work with in your externship? Here's a list for each externship:

Externship 1

 **Dogs**

 **Cats**

Externship 2

 **Dogs**

 **Cats**

 **Cattle**

 **Equine** (*horses, donkeys, etc.*)

 **Small ruminants** (*sheep & goats*)

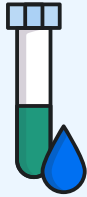
 **Domestic birds** (*including chickens*)

 **Rabbits**

 **Rats or mice**

How Externships Work (*continued*)

Check out some of the exciting skills you'll complete during your externships!



Assisting with procedures and surgery

- Restraining for exams
- Monitoring Anesthesia
- Passing instruments
- Drawing blood



Taking vitals and doing patient assessments

- Temperature, pulse, respiration (TPR)
- Observing behavior & condition



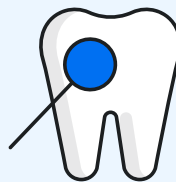
Giving oral medications and injections

- Administering vaccines
- Placing & maintaining IV catheters



Lab work and diagnostics

- Running fecals, bloodwork, urinalysis
- Analyzing samples under a microscope



Dental procedures

- Oral examinations and dental charting
- Taking dental x-rays
- Scaling & polishing teeth



Taking radiographs

- Position patients
- Take and produce diagnostic radiographs
- Understand personal protective equipment & safety



Client support and communication

- Discharging patients
- Explain how to administer medications
- Provide client education on illness and diseases

Why Externships Matter

You can study your online material until your eyes are blurry, but it won't prepare you for the job of a vet tech quite like hands-on experience can. Working in-person with real, live animals gives you a firmer grasp of what you're in for and whether you're up to the challenge.

It also puts into perspective the real stakes when you're performing your skills on someone's real pet as opposed to imagining

completing your skills on a theoretical animal in your head that doesn't have a loving human attached to it.

Furthermore, a program like ours is accredited, a characteristic that is often very important to employers. Our [AVMA accreditation](#) requires our learners to complete externships in order to graduate and sit for the VTNE.

The Benefits of Externships



Hands-on application of skills



Confidence builder



Preparation for real-world scenarios through supervised practice



Gain clinical experience from seasoned professionals



Refine and validate skills if already in the field



Build relationships and network with veterinarians, vet techs, and other staff for your future



Opportunity to show off your dedication, skills, and work ethic to a potential future employer

Real Student Experience

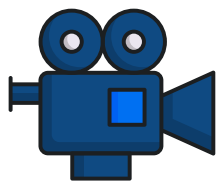
Jo Dsouza 2025 Graduate

The Penn Foster Veterinary Technician Program played a key role in helping Jo Dsouza begin his journey toward becoming a registered vet tech. His externship through the program even opened the door to the job he has today.

“The externships gave me real-world experience and even led directly to my job. I started interning at a clinic as part of my externship, and they hired me!” Jo has now been working at that same clinic for more than three years while preparing for the VTNE exam.

The hands-on experience he gained during his externship and on the job has helped him grow more confident in performing veterinary tasks. He explains, “The externships really prepare you to know how to do everything. You get three tries per skill, and the evaluators are so supportive—they tell you what to improve and help you get it right.”

“The externships gave me real-world experience and even led directly to my job. I started interning at a clinic as part of my externship, and they hired me!”



Watch Our Interview with Jo!

Hear more from Jo about his experience completing his externships.

[WATCH NOW](#)



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I have to find my own externship?

A: Yes, students are responsible for securing their externship sites. We do, however, provide tools and support as you look for one.

Q: What if I can't find an externship location?

A: You can use the externship locator tool to find pre-approved sites and continue reaching out to local clinics. If you are having trouble finding a site to take you as an extern, you can reach out to our Externship Coordinators for support as you explore different options. They're able to send lists of past sites used in your area. It's important to keep in mind that sites can decide to no longer support externships at any time, so there is no definitive list of places a student can do their externship.

Q: What does support through the site approval process look like?

A: Students will be supported by an Externship Coordinators through the site's approval process. This team will review all student forms, site forms, and site videos. They communicate with students as the reviews take place. Email updates are sent as the process progresses.

Q: Can I work while completing my externship?

A: In many cases, yes. Your schedule will depend on your externship site and their availability.

Q: Can I use my current job as an externship site?

A: Yes. If your workplace meets program requirements and is approved, you can complete your externship hours at your current place of work, at their discretion.

Q: Can I get paid during my externship?

A: This depends on the externship site. Some students are paid, while others complete it as an unpaid experience. It's at the site's discretion whether or not to pay our students for their time.

Q: How can I pause or extend my semester or externship due to life circumstances?

A: Life happens! If you find yourself in this situation, you will want to inform your Penn Foster mentor and clinical leader of any changes to your schedule so they can work with you.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Q: How can I locate a large animal vet if Fast Track Labs are booked?

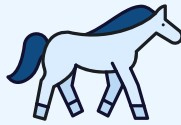
A: If this happens, you can consider reaching out to:



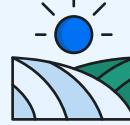
Mixed animal clinics
(small + large animal)



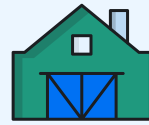
Mobile or ambulatory
large animal
veterinarians



Equine practices or
barns with veterinary
supervision



Rural clinics that see
livestock



Teaching farms or
agricultural programs
with veterinary
involvement

Some additional strategies that have helped other students include:

- Contacting your state veterinary medical association
- Networking through local farm bureaus
- Reaching out to local extension offices

Q: Why would my externship skills be denied when similar submissions previously passed?

A: There are many different factors that could play into this. Some students may find outdated information and aren't aware that criteria has updated. As requirements, rubrics, or verification standards are refined, submissions may be evaluated more closely to ensure they fully meet current externship criteria. A prior approval does not guarantee future approval if the supporting materials differ.

Q: How can I complete skills if my clinic doesn't have the equipment or species I need?

A: In Externship 2, you'll receive an externship kit that contains some of the equipment you'll need for many of your laboratory skills. Some equipment can also be purchased by the student or borrowed, or you can work with your site to obtain the equipment or species that are missing. Some students even choose to purchase their own rat or mouse! You may also need to locate additional externship sites that can assist you with any remaining skills and submit those sites for approval. Your externship application must include site(s) that can collectively supply the species and equipment necessary for all externship skills. You may have 2 sites for **Externship 1** and up to 6 sites for **Externship 2**.

Q: Why might a site be denied approval for the externship?

A: Sites must meet the AVMA-CVTEA requirements for a contemporary veterinary facility. If a site does not meet their standards, we cannot approve our students to complete their externships at that location. This is to ensure the safety of both our students and the animals. Some sites have areas that do not meet the requirements, so the site may be listed as unable to assist with certain skills due to the clinic set up. The good news is that any reason(s) for denial of a site will be thoroughly explained in an email from the externship team, so you'll be able to communicate with your site(s) and make any needed adjustments.

Conclusion

Now that you have the need-to-know info on the veterinary technician externships, you may be ready to enroll into our Veterinary Technician Associate Degree Program! The in-depth material coupled with the real-world experience you'll get can be invaluable in your journey to becoming a vet tech. Reach out to an admissions specialist or request more information about the program to see if this is the right fit for you.

Contact Information:



Admissions Specialist:
1-800-471-3232



Online Request Form:
bit.ly/request-info-form

