
Your Step By Step Guide To Becoming A Vet

A Guide for Pupils





A day in the life...

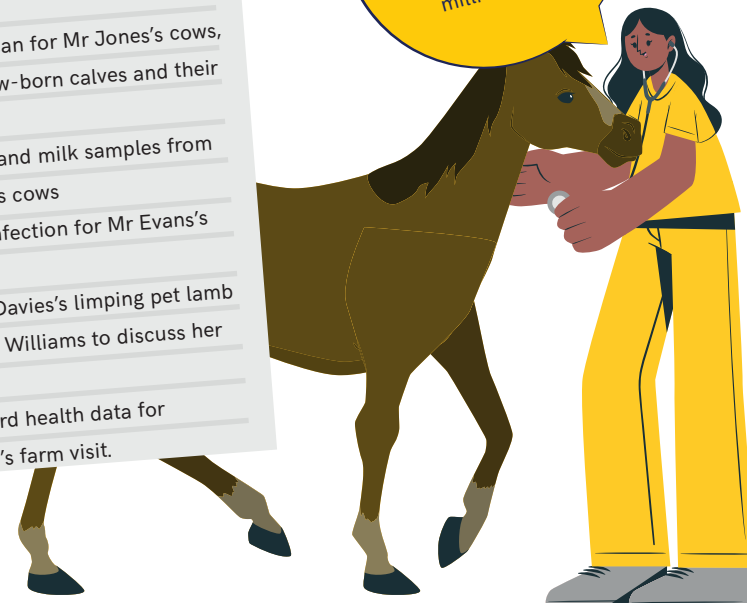
Rural Vet

Today's tasks:

- Pregnancy scan for Mr Jones's cows, check on new-born calves and their mothers
- Take blood and milk samples from Mr Jenkins's cows
- Treat eye infection for Mr Evans's bullock
- Treat Mrs Davies's limping pet lamb
- Phone Mrs Williams to discuss her pigs
- Review herd health data for tomorrow's farm visit.

Did you know?

The UK pet population is estimated at 12 million dogs and 12 million cats.



City Vet

To-do list:

- Check overnight patients
- Mr Johnson's Labrador for neutering
- Mrs Chadwick's 2 cats for spaying
- 5 booster vaccinations for dogs
- Miss Smith's Alsatian for assessment - not eating
- Miss Delaney's kitten for health check.



So you want to be a Vet?

Qualifying as a vet is a huge achievement and opens lots of doors in terms of potential careers.

What can you do with a degree in veterinary science/ medicine?

1

Work with small animals, farm animals, horses or in mixed practice.

2

Study a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons postgraduate course or pursue postgraduate studies in your chosen field at any university.

3

Travel! As a vet, you can practice in many countries, after registering with the local veterinary authorities.

4

Work in one of the vast number of roles/ sectors open to you with a Veterinary Science/ Medicine degree. These include Public Health, Consultancy, Charity, Armed Forces or Teaching



Year 7

Here are some ideas to help develop your skills and attributes during the first year in your new school.

Scientific knowledge

Get involved in an after-school science club to develop your knowledge of general science. You might even find out a little more about becoming a vet.

Communication skills

Vets need a range of skills and attributes as well as knowledge about animals, so find ways to work on your interpersonal/communication skills inside and outside school. Supporting your school on things like Open Evenings can help develop your communication skills.

Year 8

Some things to be doing to set you on the track to being a vet.

Homework

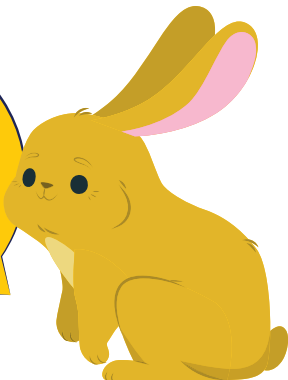
Even a vet does their homework. They need to do work and reading in their own time to make sure they're up-to-date on all of the latest happenings in the field. So while doing your homework might seem like a chore, it will get you into good habits for years to come.

TV vets

There are lots of shows on television about vets. Watch some programmes to find out what life is really like as a vet and see if this is something you can see yourself doing in the future. Remember though, TV only shows certain aspects of the job - veterinary careers are much wider than what you see on TV

Did you know?

A rabbit's ears can be rotated almost a full circle to 270 degrees.



Year 9

Your Options

In Year 9 (or in some schools, Year 8), you'll have your 'options'. Whilst you must take some core subjects in Years 10 and 11 (such as English and Maths), there'll be other subjects where you will have the 'option' to continue or not.

What GCSEs do I need?

Start to think about what a vet does and the skills they require. Choose subjects that will help you gain these skills.

Veterinary Science or Veterinary Medicine courses require Science subjects

- You may be able to choose GCSE Combined Science/ Double Award (two GCSEs) or separate/ triple sciences (three GCSEs: Biology, Chemistry, Physics). Veterinary Science or Medicine is heavily science-related and so give serious consideration to the three GCSE route if possible.

What else?

- Many vets may own and run their own practice, so perhaps consider GCSE Business Studies.
- Have a look at the UCAS website and university course pages to see what the GCSE subject and grade requirements are for Veterinary Science/ Medicine courses. By doing this, you will get a great idea of what you should be studying and what grades you need to work towards.
- Choose optional subjects which you think you will enjoy. A vet will enjoy their work and have a passion for helping sick and injured animals. The same concept applies even to GCSE subjects - you should enjoy wanting to develop your knowledge across a range of subjects.

Did you know?

Dogs have 18 different muscles for controlling their ears?



Year 10

Work Experience

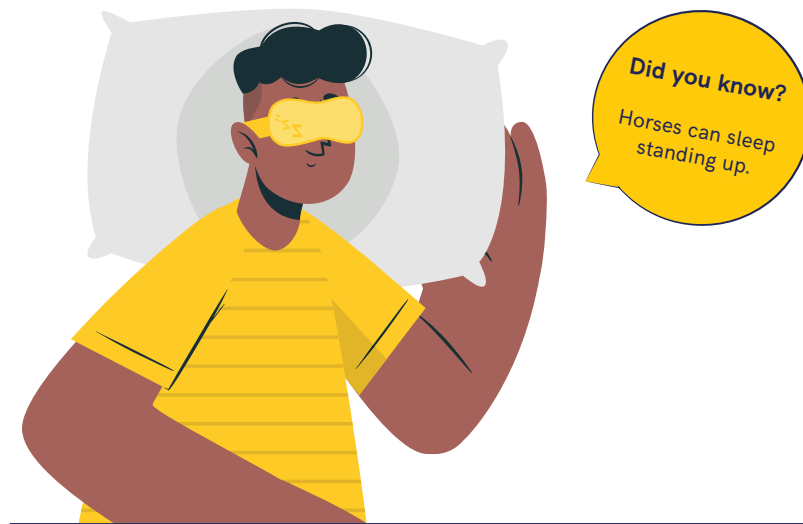
Whether you've got your heart already set on becoming a vet or if you're still unsure and want to find out more, Year 10 is a great time to start thinking about getting some work experience within the area.

Many schools have established work experience programmes, where there will be two weeks in the calendar solely dedicated to work experience. Others won't have it built in, so it will be up to you to find it for yourself. This can be a bit daunting, so here's a few bits of advice to help:

- Contact some local vet practices asking to undertake some work experience. Whether it's a day, a week or longer, it

will help you to see what vets do on a day-to-day basis.

- Speak to your Careers Advisor in school. They may have some great contacts in loads of different industries where you'll be able to work with animals.
- When you're on the Work Experience itself, ask the vet/animal professional you are working with lots of questions. Things like how they've got to where they are, what advice they would give to somebody considering the profession (you!), and what main skills and attributes a vet needs.
- When you've done the Work Experience, think about what to do next. Work Experience should only be the starting point for you to learn more about becoming a vet.



Year 11

Time to decide what happens next

You'll hear about lots of different qualification's like BTECs and A Levels. If you want to be a vet, it's really important you take the time to choose the right qualification types and subjects.

Things to consider include:

- Vet courses will require certain A Level subjects from their applicants. This may differ from university to university. Some examples though include:
 - Students must be taking Chemistry and Biology. The third A Level subject should not overlap with Biology or Chemistry.
- Students must be taking Chemistry and at least one of Biology, Physics or Mathematics.
- Students must be taking three A Level subjects: Biology or Human Biology/ Chemistry or another academic science-related subject/ third subject of choice.
- The entry requirements for Vet courses may state that applicants must be studying certain qualification types (for example A Levels, International Baccalaureate). Find out if, for example, BTEC qualifications are accepted.
- Consider whether your other subjects will help you study Veterinary Science or Veterinary Medicine. Science and mathematical-related subjects are ideal and can help to form a strong university application later on.

Year 12

Time to really start thinking about how to maximise your chances of getting onto a vet-related degree. Here are some things to consider as you move through Year 12

1. Research veterinary courses. What does each course offer and what are the entry requirements? Which university appeals to you most?
2. Work experience. Find out how much work experience (and what type) you need to have completed to apply for your chosen course. Some universities may also stipulate that the work experience needed to have taken place in the 18 months preceding the application deadline (for example). Different courses may have different requirements on all of this.
3. Develop, and gain great examples of showing, relevant key skills. A few of the key skills needed to be a successful vet are:
 - A good communicator, who can deliver complex messages in an easy-to-understand manner.
 - Care and compassion from an individual who can show empathy in often challenging circumstances.
 - Flexible yet decisive. You never know what's around the corner when working with animals, so the ability to be flexible yet make key important decisions when needed, is vital.
4. Become a 'rounded individual'. Universities want to see applications from individuals with a range of different skills and experiences.
5. Take charge of your own learning. Keep a log of your achievements.

Year 13

You're only a year away from going to university to study Veterinary Science or Veterinary Medicine. You'll submit your application early in Year 13.

What else should you doing?

1. Continue work experience and reflect on it. Don't see the work experience in isolation - engage with and learn from the experts during your work experience and take your knowledge and understanding to the next level in your own time.
2. Develop wider subject reading. Read scientific academic journals and go on Vet professional body websites to understand the contemporary issues and challenges in the field. Your A Levels (or equivalent) are not enough on their own!

3. Get some interview practice! We offer top advice from our experts later on in this guide.
4. Plan your time. Consider making a weekly plan throughout Year 13. This way, you'll know when you need to focus on writing your Personal Statement, submit your UCAS application or allocate time to your wider scientific and veterinary reading.
5. Take and actively seek out opportunities. There are lots of subject-specific taster sessions, conferences and events put on by universities, employers and professional bodies. Find out about them and attend some. All the information you gather could come in useful at interview or beyond.
6. Take some down time. Year 13 is a very busy time, so it's important to relax as well as work hard. Reward yourself too for things like doing well in a piece of coursework or finally submitting your UCAS application!



UCAS guidance

With around 2400 students applying for approximately 1200 places on vet-related courses (Veterinary Schools Council), you need to put in a strong application. Here's some key advice to help you with your UCAS application.

1. The closing date for Veterinary Science and Veterinary Medicine courses is 15 October, much earlier than for most other courses.
2. Applicants are only allowed to apply to a maximum of four choices in each of the following subjects:
 - Medicine
 - Dentistry
 - Veterinary Science or Veterinary Medicine.
3. A teacher or tutor in school/ college will be supporting your UCAS application with a reference. For them to write a great reference, they need to know about all the good things you do both in and out of the classroom. This includes academic and soft skills. So, make sure you find out who your referee will be and tell them about your strengths and experiences!
4. There are some common errors that people make in their UCAS application. We can't list them all here, but some of these are:
 - Applying to the wrong university or for the wrong course. Check carefully!
 - Not reading the question or form properly. If you're not sure, don't guess; ask!
 - Having a silly e-mail address. This doesn't set a good impression, so create a new one if necessary.
 - Naming individual universities in the Personal Statement. If you do this, it can put other universities off because they may think you're not actually interested in studying at their institution.
 - Not listing all qualifications you have studied or are studying and/ or not adding them correctly

Personal statement

Dr Gwen Rees is a Lecturer in Veterinary Science at Aberystwyth University. Here are her top tips for writing your Personal Statement and what to expect from the interview process.

Personal statement

1. Reflect on your work experience. It's not enough to just do it!
2. Show that you understand the realities of entering the veterinary profession. The BVA (British Veterinary Association) have some great Careers Guides to help you with this.
3. Show your understanding of contemporary issues within the discipline.
4. Give a handful of in-depth examples rather than lots of superficial examples. Don't forget to discuss your future aspirations within the profession.
5. Vets face ethical dilemmas all the time. Give examples where you have had to face similar problems and show how you dealt with them.
6. Give examples of critical thinking or where you question evidence. These could be from your academic studies or experiments in Biology or Chemistry.
7. Evidence your key skills. Give examples of being an effective communicator, dealing the public, handling difficult situations, having a caring nature, being flexible but decisive, and working as part of a wider, interdisciplinary team. Vets need all these skills and more!
8. Copying! Don't be tempted to make stuff up, exaggerate or copy from other Personal Statements. Your Personal Statement will be checked against years' worth of old Personal Statements to see if what you have said has been said before. Always remember it's a PERSONAL statement
9. Quotes, cliches and inspiration. You only get a short amount of characters to write the Personal Statement. Don't waste it on quotes from famous people; it says nothing about you. Write about why you are a suitable candidate for the course.



Interview

Universities may use a combination of factors from your application to decide whether to invite you to interview.

They may also give different weighting to the importance of various elements.

These can include:

- Academic performance
- Vet or animal-related work experience
- Personal and professional attributes and qualities
- Extra-curricular activity
- Completion of an additional assessment/ form. Varies on a uni by uni basis, but may be called 'Applicant Supplementary Form'.

The interview

1. Expect Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs)
2. Research graduate prospects and careers
3. Research contemporary issues facing vets
4. Always answer the question!
5. Be polite and confident
6. Don't be afraid to ask a question - it shows you are curious and have done some research.
7. Look up the unique aspects of the university/ course, and think about why you want to go there specifically'

Did you know?

Cows form friendships and bear grudges!

Veterinary Science at Aberystwyth

Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) at Aberystwyth University and the Royal Veterinary College, London

How long is the course?

5 years

Where will I study?

This course is unique as you study in both rural and urban locations:

- Years 1 & 2 in Aberystwyth
- Years 3-5 at Royal Veterinary College's Hawkshead Campus in Hertfordshire Plus
- Return to Aberystwyth in Years 4 & 5 to complete a core rotation in Wales, with an emphasis on livestock.

Typical entry requirements;

AAA in three A Level subjects to include Biology and Chemistry.

How do I apply?

Through UCAS, via ucas.com.

When is the closing date?

15 October.

Will I require work experience?

Yes. 70 hours in one or more veterinary practices + 70 hours working with live animals in a non-clinical environments (with a minimum of 35 hours being farm-animal or equine related).

Is an interview part of the application process?

Yes. If selected to attend an interview, you should expect the process to be 'Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs)', where you engage with numerous stakeholders from the field

Course
Information



Additional
Course
Information



Alternatives to studying Veterinary Science at Aberystwyth University



Check out
these courses
on our website

At Aberystwyth University, we have lots of different courses if you'd like to pursue a career working with animals. If you are not entirely sure that Veterinary Science is for you, why not consider one of these instead?

Agriculture

Equine Science

Agriculture with Animal Science

Equine and Veterinary Bioscience

Agriculture with Business Management

Marine and Freshwater Biology

Animal Behaviour

Wildlife Conservation

Animal Science

Zoology



Tips on choosing a university course and where to study

Whether it's Veterinary Science/ Medicine, another science-related subject or a completely different area you're interested in, let's have a look at some things you can do now to help make sure you thrive at the right university for you!

1. Research courses. Choosing the right course is key to your success. Courses with similar titles may actually cover different things at different universities. Things to look into include:
 - Module information online to see what you'll actually be studying in the courses you are interested in.
 - Assessment methods. These usually include exams and written coursework, but there might also be presentations and other things.
 - Graduate employment figures. What are your chances of getting a job when you have finished your course?
 - Student satisfaction. High levels of satisfaction indicates good quality teaching.
2. Teaching. We all learn in different ways and as courses are taught in different ways at different universities, you may want to find out about teaching styles. Also to consider, what learning environment are you taught in? What are the facilities like? How practical is the course? How many students are in your classes?
3. Attend lots of Open Days. This will enable you to compare and contrast different towns and cities, universities and courses.
4. UCAS Fairs and other national conventions. Go to as many as you can and ask questions.
5. Location. Are you looking for a rural environment or city life? Do you want a campus based university? What are you looking for from the location in terms of recreation, fun and things to do in your free time? These are all things to consider when looking at a course and university; you need to think about what is right for you!

Jargon Busters:

EMS

Extramural Studies. This is the term used to describe the work placements that all veterinary students have to undertake during their training.

AHEMS

Animal Husbandry EMS is a series of work placements at establishments which regularly care for the day to day needs of animals such as dairy farms, equine yards, sheep farms and dog kennels. These placements are undertaken in the first 2 years of the veterinary degree.

CEMS

Clinical EMS refers to work placements at veterinary practices, which are undertaken in the later years of the course.

PDP

Professional Development Phase aims to help newly-qualified veterinary graduates make the transition from life as a veterinary student to working in clinical practice as a professional veterinary surgeon. It provides a structure whereby new graduates, with the support of their employer and new colleagues, can continue to develop their professional and clinical skills, reflect on their progress and plan their future professional development.

Clinical

Vets may work in "clinical" roles, or "non-clinical" roles. Clinical roles are those where vets are treating animals, such as a small animal vet working in a practice. Non-clinical roles are where a vet uses their specialist knowledge but is not regularly treating sick animals. These might be vets involved in research, teaching or government work, for example.

RCVS

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. This is the governing body of the profession in the United Kingdom. All vets working in the UK must be members of the RCVS.

General Practice

Most vets work in general practice after they graduate from veterinary school. General practice means a non-specialist centre where vets treat pets, horses or farm animals.

Mixed practice

A veterinary practice might be described as a mixed practice if it treats a large variety of animal species. Traditionally, almost all veterinary practices were mixed, treating cattle, sheep, horses, dogs and cats. Mixed practices are now less common, and are usually found in rural areas.

Referral practice

A referral practice is a veterinary practice which employs specialist vets who have further qualifications that enable them to accept difficult and complex cases from general practice vets for more specialist treatment. For example, a general practice vet might refer a dog with a complicated leg fracture to a referral centre to be seen by a specialist veterinary orthopaedic surgeon.





Veterinary Education Centre,
Aberystwyth University,
Aberystwyth,
Ceredigion,
SY23 3FL

+44 (0)01970 621646

vet@aber.ac.uk

@abervetschool

Designed and produced by
Global Marketing and Student Recruitment,
Aberystwyth University 2025.

