Veterinarian

Veterinarians are trained to care for animals by maintaining health and preventing and treating diseases. They also play a part in human health, especially in areas of public health and food security. Many veterinarians are involved with research into biomedical problems that afflict humans and animals.

Pet owners and those who raise animals for commercial purposes usually need veterinary services. Veterinarians often specialize in the care of certain types of animals, whether they are small family pets or large commercial or farm animals. They are active in the control of animal diseases in that also affect humans (known as zoonoses). Rabies, brucellosis, and salmonellosis are examples. Possibly the most important human benefit of veterinary care is the elimination of disease from animal products. Because of the efforts of veterinary medicine, meat, poultry, eggs, and milk are relatively safe for consumption in North America. (Note: many countries do not have this infrastructure and food supply is less secure.)

Where do they work?

Most veterinarians work in private practice. An increasing number work in the larger regional centers in rural Alaska. Many veterinarians travel to outlying villages to provide service on a scheduled basis. A few veterinarians are employed by local, state, or governmental agencies to study or control disease in wild animals, or to control the spread of disease from animals to humans.

Educational Requirements

- Graduation from high school with a strong college preparatory background in English, science (especially biology, chemistry and physics), and math.
- Completion of at least two years of college with courses in biology, physics, biochemistry, genetics, mathematics and statistics. The GRE General Test is required and students are encouraged to take additional upper division biomedical science courses. The following are not required, but are highly recommended: microbiology, cell biology, developmental biology, computer sciences, anatomy, physiology, histology, nutrition, and other advanced biomedical sciences. Competition for veterinary schools is very high, so a bachelor’s degree is common and grades must be very good to excellent.

Hourly Wage Range

$31.75-$76.67 (Mean $52.85)*
*Based on 2016 Alaska DOL data

Years in School

8 years (after high school graduation)

Academic Programs in Alaska

Though Alaska does not currently have a College of Veterinary Medicine, the College of Natural Science and Mathematics at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) started a 2+2 Veterinary Medical Program in the Fall of 2015. Students complete their first two years of training at UAF and the last two years at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

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National Contact

The American Veterinary Medical Association
1931 North Meacham Road, Suite 100
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173-4360
Phone: (800) 248-2862
Email: avmainfo@avma.org
• Completion of four years of veterinary school. The degree awarded is the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) for most institutions.

• DVMs require a license to practice in a specific state.

• Veterinarians who practice in public health related positions may wish to complete a master’s degree in public health.

• Specialty degrees can be obtained after graduation from veterinary school. Most take three to four years.