



BECOME A  
**VETERINARIAN**  
AND MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE



# BECOME A **VETERINARIAN** AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Preventing disease and healing animals is at the heart of what veterinarians do, but they also do so much more.

Veterinary medicine is a well-respected profession because veterinarians make significant contributions to improving the health and wellbeing of the animals and people they serve.

Veterinarians practice medicine that alleviates suffering, contributes to groundbreaking medical advancements, protects the environment, and makes the world a better, healthier place.

If you've decided to become a veterinarian – congratulations! You've decided to embark on an important, fulfilling and versatile career.

Or perhaps you're just beginning to explore the option of a veterinary medical career. Either way, this brochure will help you become familiar with what it takes to become a veterinarian and what you can do now, no matter where you are in the process, to achieve your goal.

First, let's dispel some myths.

**Myth:**

It's extremely hard to get into veterinary medical school. In fact, it's probably beyond your grasp.

**Fact:**

Getting into veterinary medical school isn't easy but it's definitely an attainable goal. The average veterinary medical school student is above average. But the average veterinary medical student might



be someone like you. For example, the average applicant to veterinary medical school is a 24-year-old woman from the suburbs with a bachelor's degree who has applied to veterinary medical school 1.2 times. She has an average GPA of 3.56 and GRE scores of 155 (66th percentile), 154 (57th percentile) and 3.9 (54th percentile) on the verbal, quantitative, and analytical tests, respectively.

If you don't fit the profile of the average student, don't let that deter you. Veterinary medical schools are committed to diversity and seek to admit students who possess the right mix of smarts, passion, and talent, even when they don't fit the average profile.

### **Myth:**

In order to get into veterinary school, I need to major in a pre-veterinary program as an undergraduate.

### **Fact:**

Pre-vet programs are great, but they're not mandatory. Veterinary medical students come from all kinds of backgrounds and majors, including the arts or humanities. The important thing is to accumulate the necessary

prerequisites, especially prerequisites in math and science, which vary by school. It's best to start taking math and science early in your academic career, but you can also pick up those classes along the way. General aptitude, especially aptitude in math and science, a willingness to tackle tough subjects, and a solid work ethic as indicated by good grades, will provide the foundation that you need to apply to veterinary medical schools with confidence.

### **Myth:**

If I become a veterinarian, I'll spend my entire career taking care of cats and dogs.

### **Fact:**

Most veterinarians do go into private medical practice in some form, working with companion animals, but a veterinary medical degree prepares you for a wide range of careers. Many veterinarians find that their DVM degree takes them to unexpected places, where they might work with the government, educational institutions, or corporations. Veterinary medicine is a career with options.



# WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS AS A VETERINARIAN?

The following list is not exhaustive but provides an overview of careers where graduates of veterinary medical schools can effectively apply their Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degrees.

- Private practice, either general practice or (with advanced training and experience) a specialty field, such as ophthalmology, orthopedics, aquatic animal medicine, marine biology, wildlife animal medicine, or emergency animal medicine.
- Corporate veterinary medicine, for example, with corporations that provide veterinary care, test human drugs for safety, or produce animal-related products.
- The federal government employs veterinarians through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) working on biosecurity, public health, meat inspection, regulatory medicine, agricultural animal health, environmental quality, or the investigation of disease outbreaks.
- The U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force offer career opportunities in areas such as food safety and clinical care for working dogs and companion animals. The military also provides advanced training in specialty areas for those who commit to service.
- Research, in either a university, corporate, or government setting.
- Teaching, either in academia or non-professional schools. With 40 percent of aging faculty in academia eligible for retirement over the next 10 years, projections indicate an increasing need for professors to teach in all disciplines of veterinary medicine.
- Public health, particularly with governmental agencies such as the United States Public Health Service, which works to control the transmission of infectious diseases from animals to humans (zoonotic).
- Food supply medicine, with either the state or federal government or a food producer.
- Global veterinary medicine, in private practice or with international agencies working in areas such as food production and safety or emerging diseases.
- Public policy, working for governments on animal and zoonotic diseases, animal welfare, public health issues, or as consultants with non-governmental agencies.
- Shelter medicine, working with communities and private or public agencies to ensure the health and wellbeing of animal populations housed in shelters.

There are additional opportunities available with state and municipal governments, nonprofits, and in areas that require a background in comparative medicine.

# PREPARING FOR VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL

How to prepare as a high school student:

- Gain a solid background in math and science.
- Take part in extracurricular activities (athletics, school clubs, FFA, etc).
- Study and maintain a high GPA and high SAT/ACT scores.
- Acquire as much experience with pets as possible. Consider volunteering at your local humane society or with a local veterinarian.

How to prepare as a college undergraduate:

- Take courses that include math and several science courses, such as biology and chemistry.
- Maintain a high GPA.
- Gain as much broad exposure to veterinary medicine as possible. Consider job shadowing with veterinarians, scientists, working on a farm or volunteering at an animal shelter.
- Schools have different requirements for standardized test scores. Contact schools that interest you to find out their requirements.
- Join a pre-vet club. Most colleges and universities have one.





This brochure is brought to you by the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), a nonprofit membership organization working to protect and improve the health and welfare of animals, people and the environment by advancing academic veterinary medicine. Its members include veterinary medical colleges in the United States and Canada, departments of veterinary science, departments of comparative medicine, international colleges of veterinary medicine, and affiliate colleges of veterinary medicine. The AAVMC works to create a stronger, more prosperous future for academic veterinary medicine and the profession and society it serves.

To learn more about applying to veterinary medical school, visit the AAVMC at [aavmc.org](http://aavmc.org) and click on the "Students, Applicants and Advisors" section in the orange bar.



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