

VETERINARY TECHNICIAN JOB DESCRIPTION

Veterinary technicians may also be identified as registered veterinary technicians, certified veterinary technicians, animal-health technicians, or veterinary nurses.

Veterinary technicians must have a broad knowledge of animal science, medicine, and husbandry, including a basic knowledge of pharmacology and sufficient mathematical skills to ensure the administration of accurate drug and fluid doses. They must be able to successfully restrain animals, complete clinical laboratory tests, use multiple radiology techniques, administer and monitor animals under anesthesia, assist in surgery, and perform dental procedures. Technicians must also deliver compassionate nursing care.

General Knowledge and Tasks

General Knowledge

- Know the range of services the practice provides and the species it treats.
- Be reasonably familiar with breeds and coat colors.
- Accurately estimate weights of patients.
- Give directions to the practice.
- Follow OSHA standards. Be able to find Safety Data Sheets quickly.
- Know and use standard medical and business abbreviations.
- Use proper medical terminology when speaking and writing.
- Understand the life cycle and pathology of common parasites (intestinal parasites, heartworms, fleas, ticks), and know the names of most common preventatives, recommended treatments, and diagnostics.
- Be familiar with zoonotic (contagious) diseases, including their prevention and steps to reduce or eliminate transmission.
- Know the policies regarding provision of veterinary care, treatment of stray animals, deposits for hospitalized patients, payments, credit, pet health insurance, and finance fees.
- Competently speak and write the English language.

General Tasks

- Always be in position and prepared to work at the start of each scheduled shift.
- Ensure accurate personal time records are made via the practice management software system.
- Be aware of cleanliness of clinic and grounds. Routinely pick up trash or feces from the parking lot, sidewalks, or entryways.
- Maintain a professional appearance while at work, including clean and pressed uniforms or clothes. Change clothes during shifts as necessary to look professional and avoid carrying odors.
- Smile and maintain an even, friendly demeanor while on the job.
- Perform job tasks efficiently without rushing.
- Promote a positive attitude among staff.
- Handle stress and pressure with poise and tact.

- Be willing and available to stay late or through breaks, when needed, to assist with emergency or critical-care patients.
- Show respect for clients, team members, and animals (alive or deceased) at all times.
- Effectively promote preventive health care, nutrition, and pet health insurance to clients. Support what fellow staff members have said to clients.
- Have the physical strength and ability to stand for an entire shift when needed, and be able to lift pets and objects weighing up to 50 pounds without assistance. Assist in lifting patients weighing more than 50 pounds.
- Maintain a list of tasks and engage in productive work during slow periods.
- Schedule technical and kennel staff.
- Supervise and direct technical and kennel staff.
- Direct on-the-job training of technical and kennel staff.
- Assist other employees as needed. Avoid waiting for coworkers to ask for assistance.
- Maintain your personal veterinary technician certificate, license, or registration.
- Stock hospital supplies and pharmaceutical, pet-food, and over-the-counter products.
- Ensure that medical supplies are always available. Add new items to the list of depleted supplies.
- Regularly check for outdated supplies. Remove and replace them as directed by the office manager.
- Call in prescriptions to outside pharmacies.
- Assist in hiring new employees by advising candidates of openings, offering them applications, working with them to help evaluate their personalities and skill levels, and providing your opinion to the hiring manager.
- Participate in your performance appraisal, and, as requested, in those of others.
- Participate in all staff and training meetings.
- Keep up with new developments in the field by reading journals and attending continuing education. Attend off-site CE as required by the practice manager or as required to maintain your license.
- Organize and present training seminars for other support staff.
- Conduct tours of the practice and/or kennel. Before each tour, ensure that the facility is orderly and that staff and patients are prepared for tours.
- Maintain constant vigilance regarding open doorways that could allow pets to escape from the facility.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding clients and patients for whom the practice provides veterinary services.
- Be prepared to handle any pet or facility emergency that may arise, including dog or cat fights, choking or strangulating animals, and facility fire or weather-related emergencies. Follow contingency plans.
- Follow established facility closing procedures to ensure the security of patients, staff, data, revenue, inventory, and the building.
- Always employ proper use of personal protective gear when handling medical or biological waste.
- Participate in daily housekeeping or facility maintenance activities as directed.

Front-Office Tasks

- Know phone functions, including hold, intercom, transfer, forward, and three-way calling.
- Answer the phone by the third ring when receptionists are preoccupied or unavailable.
- Use patients' names during phone conversations with clients about their pets. Know each patient's sex so the pet can be called "he" or "she."
- Possess sufficient knowledge of animal husbandry and basic medicine to answer routine questions or refer calls to appropriate colleagues.
- Access client information within the practice-management software system. Enter and retrieve client and patient data in the computer.
- Assist receptionists with clients' payments, when needed, and provide clients with receipts that detail their transactions.

Client-Interaction Tasks

Patient-Admittance Tasks

- Cordially greet incoming clients and their pets, addressing each by name, and check them in when receptionists are busy.
- Admit patients to the hospital. Provide counseling and compassion for clients, answer their questions unless it is clear that the attending doctor should do so, and ensure that all admittance paperwork is properly completed.
- Use clients' and patients' names during conversations.
- Complete and discuss financial estimates for clients as directed by doctors or the hospital administrator.
- Inform clients of recommended services for their pets and obedience training or special health care programs offered by the practice.
- Provide clients with accurate and thorough information about over-the-counter products. Understand and explain internal and external parasite products as well as diets, dental products, and behavior management tools.
- Know where brochures and client-education materials are stored. Provide clients with handouts and brochures regarding relevant medical conditions, surgeries, immunizations, internal and external parasites, pet insurance, and diets.
- Assist clients with unruly or unrestrained pets.
- Call for waiting clients using pets' names and clients' last names. Lead them to exam rooms.
- Transfer incoming patients to appropriate wards and ensure their comfort. Identify patients with cage cards and neck bands. Check for the presence of appropriate paperwork.

Pet-Identification Tasks

- Scan new patients and strays for microchips, tags, and tattoos. Identify and record microchip numbers, tattoos, and/or patient markings in patient records.

- Communicate with clients about the various pet-identification systems available, including tags, tattoos, and microchips.
- Assist clients in registering pet-identification information in the practice's computer system and in the appropriate national database.

Procedural Tasks

- As patients are admitted, build a surgery, procedure, and/or treatment schedule for the approval of the attending doctors.
- Develop each day's hospital census and/or client-update forms, starting with in-hospital patients, and assist with development of these forms as patients are admitted for day-procedures, surgeries, or hospitalization. Deliver copies to the front desk at established times.

Patient-Discharge Tasks

- Coordinate patient transfers with front-desk, kennel, and/or veterinarians.
- Prepare medications and prescriptions for dispensing as directed by the doctor. Ensure that each prescription label contains the following information: doctor's name; practice's name, address, and phone number including area code; date; patient's and client's name; medication name, strength and volume (or number); administration instructions including route of administration, such as by mouth or in the ear; and product's expiration date.
- Dispense medications. Discuss administration or application and potential side effects with owners as directed by doctors.
- Accurately invoice clients from charges on travel or circle sheets or records. Activate computer reminders and insert computerized notes, treatments, diagnostics, and diagnoses.
- Receive and record client payments.
- Discharge patients. Instruct clients on the care of patients at home, the timing of recheck appointments, and warnings of adverse effects of surgeries or medications.
- Assist grieving clients and comfort them. Be familiar with the grieving process. Always be sensitive to background chatter or conversations that could exacerbate the anxieties and grief clients experience during euthanasias or deaths of their pets.
- Provide clients with memorials of their dead-on-arrival, died-during-hospitalization, or euthanized pets, (e.g., locks of hair, paw prints, or paw molds). Return collars, leashes, and other accessories.
- Handle angry or grieving clients with a calm and reassuring manner. Be familiar with the grieving process. Always be sensitive to background chatter or conversations that could exacerbate the anxieties and grief clients experience during euthanasias or deaths of their pets.
- Assist clients transport their pets to and from vehicles if needed.

Medical-Record Management Tasks

- Understand the medical-record filing system.
- Know all possible locations for storage of records of hospitalized patients.
- Locate medical files for hospitalized, surgical, or incoming patients.

- Record doctors' and technicians' notes in patients' computer records or on paper records.
- Check on the immunizations or reminder status of arriving pets.
- Understand and use special record notations, including male, female, aggressive, caution, no credit/charging, and/or inactive.
- Make notes in patient files of all relevant phone or in-person conversations with clients, especially when notifying them of lab results. Place your initials after the entries.
- Verify and/or witness clients' statements regarding procedures, including euthanasias.
- Check files for completeness of notes, charges, callbacks, and reminders before refiling. Ensure that records include current laboratory tests, procedure results, current patients' weights, immunizations, diagnoses, and treatments.
- Accurately file all paper medical records.

Exam-Room Tasks

- Possess sufficient strength and assertiveness to effectively restrain patients and ensure the safety of clients and personnel.
- Clean and straighten exam rooms to prepare for incoming patients. Spray disinfectant on exam tables, wipe them clean, and dry them. Remove sources of offensive odors; empty trash if necessary. Check floors, walls, doors, and counters, and sweep or clean them as needed to remove hair, body fluids, and dirt.
- Obtain and record patient histories from clients.
- Be able to measure and record each patient's weight, temperature, pulse rate, and respiratory rate.
- Answer questions and educate clients about basic pet care and procedures including nutrition; internal and external parasite control; immunization protocols; the administration of topical, oral, otic, and ophthalmic medications; spay and neuter procedures; and behavior and obedience training.
- Complete cursory overall assessments of patients and record your findings in the medical records.
- Identify common external parasites.
- Perform suture removals, nail trims, and wing trims.
- Using aseptic procedures, draw up vaccines and/or injections for administration.
- Vaccinate pets. Follow manufacturers' directions and guidelines for placement of injectable vaccines at appropriate sites.
- Dispose of used needles and syringes and other sharp objects as set forth by the practice's policy and OSHA standards.
- Perform suture removals and nail trims.
- Keep a small notebook or personal digital assistant (PDA) in your pocket to record accurate instructions, particularly regarding the preparation and administering medications to be dispensed.
- Lay out and/or set up instruments that doctors will use during ophthalmic, otic, oral, and/or skin examinations, as determined by the patients' presenting complaints, prior to the doctors' arrivals in rooms.
- Take photographs or videos of patients' conditions and lesions as directed by veterinarians.
- Record doctors' findings during medical examinations.

- Keep exam rooms stocked with syringes, needles, bandage materials, and prepackaged dispensable products. Regularly restock exam rooms or pharmacy refrigerators with vaccines.
- Inform the hospital administrator or doctors immediately of all bite or scratch wounds you suffer so that reports can be made and you can be referred for timely medical care by a physician if necessary. Clean all wounds quickly and thoroughly.

Nursing-Care Tasks

Basic and Environmental Tasks

- Prioritize tasks to maximize clients' satisfaction and patients' health.
- Maintain controlled-substance logs with patients' names, doctors' names, types and amounts of drugs used, amounts of drugs remaining, and your signature.
- Keep controlled drugs secured to meet Drug Enforcement Agency and state board specifications.
- All medications and diets prescribed by a doctor will be verified by two staff members and initialed prior to distribution to client.
- Track, use, and/or store comfort items brought by clients for hospitalized patients.
- Wash, dry, and store patients' bedding and the practice's towels. Bedding should be in good repair.
- Provide occupants with clean, soft bedding.
- Clean cages when they are soiled, and scoop or change litter boxes as needed.
- Maximize patients' comfort with a gentle and reassuring manner. Understand that actions that would constitute animal cruelty under state or local laws or the practice's policies will be grounds for immediate reprimand and/or termination.
- Be familiar with and adopt common Fear Free practices in keeping with clinic policies.
- Monitor patients for vomit, blood, urine, and feces in the cage, and clean patients and cages as needed. Note unexpected incidents on cage cards or charts.
- Monitor patients' behaviors and note potentially aggressive behaviors. Use caution when handling aggressive or potentially aggressive pets. Request assistance when needed.
- Monitor changes in patients' conditions. Alert doctors to significant changes.
- Alert doctors to notable pathology identified during patient assessments.
- Follow isolation procedures. Prevent contact between contagious animals and others. Using the designated products and dilutions for disinfectants, properly disinfect your shoes, hands, and clothing before leaving isolation areas.
- Walk dogs on a double leash or on a leash within a fenced exercise area. Ensure that they are restrained and under your control at all times.
- Assess hospitalized patients' temperatures, pulse rates, respiratory rates, and respiratory qualities, and record data in appropriate records.
- Prepare meals and feed animals. Note appetite on cage cards or patient records.
- Clip hair in a manner that minimizes clipper burn. Maintain, clean, and lubricate clipper blades on a regular basis.
- Complete and update cage cards.
- Use warning stickers and notations on cage cards and records as appropriate.

- Prior to discharge, remove patients' catheters, clean patients so that no body fluids are detectable, and bathe and/or groom patients prior to transferring them to clients.
- Disinfect cages as soon as possible after patients are removed from them.

Patient-Treatment Tasks

- Understand the mechanics and application of standards of asepsis.
- Properly calculate medication dosages and volumes of liquids to be administered to patients.
- Maintain IV catheters so fluids flow freely; flush and clean as needed.
- Monitor and maintain urinary-collection bags. Record urine production on charts.
- Administer IV, IM, SQ, and oral medications.
- Provide IV and SQ fluid therapy to patients. Maintain aseptic conditions. Understand the different types of fluids and additives used in the practice. Calculate, add, and administer medications through fluids. Calculate and administer proper fluid flow rates to patients.
- Monitor, adjust, and maintain IV infusion pumps.
- Administer routine enemas.
- Apply wound dressings and treatments. Maintain a clean site. Understand the applications for wet, dry, and wet-to-dry dressings.
- Apply bandages in a manner that ensures that the bandage protects and/or limits mobility and remains properly applied. Cover and maintain bandages as needed to preserve function and cleanliness.
- Use cotton swabs to clean ears, bulb syringes to flush them, curettes to remove debris, and catheters to irrigate ear canals. Administer ear treatments without causing trauma, and teach clients how to complete this task.
- Trim nails to the quick without causing bleeding.
- Provide physical therapy to patients as instructed.
- Provide medical grooming, including medicated baths, dips, and mat removal.
- Understand how to stop bleeding by using styptic pencils, powder or other means.
- De-flea patients with flea combs, flea sprays, spot-on topicals, baths, dips, or appropriate medication.
- De-tick patients with tick-removal instruments or medications.
- Identify a patient's level of pain and possible causes of pain, and understand the medications and methods used to control pain.
- Assist kennel staff in medicating and treating boarders.

Technical Tasks

General Technical Tasks

- Restrain pets in a manner that allows necessary work to be performed, minimizes patient stress, and ensures their safety and that of other people.
- Safely and effectively apply and use restraint devices, including muzzles, towels, gloves, and cat bags.

- Perform venipunctures using patients' cephalic, saphenous, and jugular veins in a manner that minimizes trauma to patients and injury to veins and allows you to successfully obtain nonhemolyzed blood samples.
- Collect urine and fecal samples from patients. Aseptically place urinary catheters in male dogs for urine collection when necessary.
- Aseptically place cephalic, saphenous, and jugular intravenous catheters without causing patient trauma.
- Obtain cytology samples and stain as requested.
- Draw blood for transfusions. Type-match blood samples. Perform blood transfusions: set up filters for whole-blood administration, oversee administration of blood and blood products, and monitor patients for transfusion reactions.
- Set up and record diagnostic multi-lead ECG tracings.
- Set up and read blood glucose test strips and urinalysis dipsticks.
- Make effective smears from vaginal swabs.
- Obtain ear swabs and cultures for analysis.
- Express anal sacs.
- Properly implant microchips and test their functionality.
- Assist with euthanasia procedures. Hold off veins and release pressure at appropriate times when catheters are not used.

Emergency-Care Tasks

- Provide basic life support, including CPR, airway maintenance, and oxygen therapy.
- Apply temporary bandages or splints.
- Know where to find the emergency drug kit. Make sure products have not expired, and understand the basic uses for these drugs.
- Control bleeding using pressure bandages and tourniquets.
- Provide fluid and pharmacologic therapy under veterinary supervision.
- Provide cooling baths and/or enemas for heatstroke patients.

Laboratory Tasks

- Understand the paperwork and procedures of outside laboratories used by the practice.
- Maintain all laboratory test kits and reagents under proper environmental conditions.
- Maintain centrifuges, microscopes, and chemistry analyzers.
- Make slides of body fluids. Air-dry and stain them as directed.
- Make blood smears with properly feathered edges to ensure accurate interpretation.
- Evaluate blood smears to accurately assess platelet numbers, red and white cell morphology, and differential white counts. Recognize blood pathogens.
- Maintain stains and other supplies to ensure the best results. Prevent contamination of stains and replace them when ineffective or contaminated.
- Use proper stain techniques to maximize the diagnostic capability of prepared slides.
- Evaluate vaginal smears to determine stages of estrus.
- Perform urinalyses. Properly use and record data from urine dipsticks. Measure specific gravity. Evaluate urine sediments for crystals, cells, and other material.

- Perform fecal examinations, including direct and flotation procedures.
- Perform and evaluate skin scrapings and ear smears.
- Complete routine ELISA tests, such as heartworm and feline viral tests.
- Perform CBCs and differentials.
- Set up, centrifuge, and read hematocrits.
- Use refractometers or chemistry analyzers to evaluate total protein levels of serum or other fluids.
- Set up and read blood glucose test strips.
- Use handheld glucometers to measure blood glucose values.
- Collect and prepare samples for bacterial and fungal cultures. Evaluate in-house cultures.
- Evaluate bleeding/clotting times.
- Maintain quality control by running control samples and periodically testing in-house results against results from an outside laboratory.

Surgical Tasks

- Develop or locate and maintain equipment and instrument maintenance logs.
- Understand aseptic principles and apply them to surgical patients, instruments, equipment, and rooms.
- Know the names of instruments and where they are stored.
- Prepare the surgery suite(s) for incoming patients.
- Prepare patients for surgery. Clip surgical fields with straight margins. Minimize tissue trauma. Properly scrub and prepare surgical fields. Maintain clean fields when moving patients.
- Properly position and align patients for surgery.
- Use circulating warm-water baths and/or hot water bottles to maintain the body temperatures of anesthetic and surgical patients.
- Ground patients when using electrocautery.
- Properly scrub hands and arms for surgical cleanliness, and
- aseptically gown and glove yourself when called to assist or “scrub in.”
- Assist surgeons with aseptic gowning and gloving.
- Anticipate surgeons’ needs for assistance, instruments, and patient monitoring, and treatments.
- Monitor patients’ recoveries. Protect patients from aspiration and hypothermia. Deflate cuffs and remove endotracheal tubes as soon as gag reflexes return.
- Stimulate and care for puppies and kittens removed by cesarean section.
- Maintain surgery logs with patients’ names, doctors’ names, procedures performed, types and amounts of preanesthetic and anesthetic agents, and surgical times.
- Update patient records with drugs administered, procedures performed, and patient status during surgeries and recoveries.

Surgical Cleaning Tasks

- Clean operating rooms and equipment after use.

- Clean floors and counters in surgical prep and recovery areas, treatment rooms, and wards after use and as needed.
- Wash, sterilize, and store endotracheal tubes.
- Dispose of used needles and syringes and other sharp objects as set forth by the practice's policy and OSHA standards.
- Clean surgical instruments by hand and/or ultrasonic cleaner.
- Operate and maintain the autoclave.
- Pack and autoclave instruments. Using lists of instruments or photos as guides, ensure that packs contain the proper numbers and types of instruments and that they are labeled with dates and types of packs. Apply pressure and temperature sterilization tape and/or monitors, and verify effectiveness after autoclaving.

Dental Tasks

- Know the names of surgical and dental instruments and their storage locations.
- Understand and use proper attire when operating dental equipment, including masks, eye protection, caps, and protective apparel such as a gown or scrubs.
- Recognize significant dental and gum disease, record it in patient records, and bring it to the attention of doctors.
- Perform dental scaling and polishing procedures without traumatizing the gingiva.
- Perform fluoride treatments.
- Maintain proper dental records for each patient.

Anesthetic Tasks

- Be sufficiently familiar with the anesthetic machines to operate, maintain, and repair them.
- Routinely check and change soda lime. Record dates of soda-lime changes on the machines.
- Check anesthetic hoses for leaks and internal contaminants.
- Ensure that the anesthetic scavenging system is functional.
- Understand the differences between closed- and open-circuit administration of anesthetic agents, adjustments needed for oxygen flow rates, and anesthetic percentages used for each.
- Regularly check the level of inhalant anesthetic in vaporizers. Add anesthetic as needed.
- Check pressures in oxygen tanks regularly and replace tanks at appropriate times. Check regularly for leaks in oxygen hoses and couplings.
- Connect oxygen tanks to anesthetic machines without damaging gaskets. Maintain spare gaskets and replace them if they are damaged.
- Test endotracheal tube cuffs for leaks prior to use and replace them.
- Know the volume of air that should be used to inflate various-sized cuffs to pressure levels that prevent leakage without traumatizing tracheas.
- Generally understand the various anesthetic agents used for different patients.
- Administer preanesthetic drugs to surgical patients as directed. Record times of administration.
- Preoxygenate surgical patients that are at particular risk for oxygen deprivation as directed.
- Administer IV, IM, and inhalation anesthetic agents safely.

- Estimate endotracheal tube diameters for patients. Safely pass endotracheal tubes and ensure proper fits.
- Use a laryngoscope or other light source as needed to pass tubes.
- Check patients for proper respiratory function during intubation to ensure that tubes are in the trachea and not the esophagus.
- Monitor surgical patients by tracking anesthetic depths, heart rates, respiratory rates, temperatures, pulse oximetry, and ECGs during anesthetic procedures.
- Adjust gas anesthesia for each patient to safely maintain proper surgical planes. Administer additional injectable anesthetics within safety guidelines as needed to maintain desired surgical depths.
- Use palpebral, toe pinch, and corneal reflexes to assess and maintain necessary surgical planes.
- Maintain anesthetic log books so as to be in compliance with AAHA and state board standards.

Imaging Tasks

Radiology Tasks

- Maintain radiographic, developing, and shielding equipment to maximize patients' and employees' safety. Record maintenance data.
- Know how to perform radiographic contrast studies, such as barium swallows, upper and lower contrast studies of the GI system, excretory urograms, and cystourethrograms.
- Minimize radiation hazards. Use protective equipment and wear exposure badges during radiographic exposures.
- Properly measure patients for effective translation to radiograph machine settings.
- Develop, use, adjust, and maintain a radiograph technique chart that maximizes efficiency by reducing erroneous exposures.
- Position patients to obtain diagnostic-quality radiographs of skeletal anatomy, internal organs, superficial lesions, or extremities.
- Consistently use right and left markers.
- Adjust machine settings to correct technique failures.
- Maintain a radiograph log book that complies with AAHA standards and/or state laws.

Ultrasound Tasks

- Prepare patients for ultrasound.
- Warm the ultrasound gel before use.
- Properly restrain and position patients for ultrasonography.
- Perform introductory ultrasound surveys as directed.
- Clean and maintain ultrasound equipment.

Inventory-Management Tasks

- Discuss new products with detail representatives and doctors.

- Develop and maintain contacts for detail reps and sources of drugs and supplies.
- Maintain lists of medications, vaccines, pet food, and/or hospital supplies to determine levels of inventory on hand. Place orders for additional supplies on demand, if so instructed, or report items needed to the ordering manager.
- Receive and stock supplies, matching invoices with packaged goods. Report all shortages, overages, and damaged goods.
- Ensure that medical supplies are always available.
- Regularly check for outdated supplies. Remove and replace them as instructed by the practice manager.