



VETERINARY MEDICINE CAREER TERMS

There are many words used to describe different types of careers and career paths in the field of veterinary medicine. This document can serve as a basis for some of these foundational words you will hear regarding career paths in veterinary medicine. The exact definitions often vary between different colleges, universities, specialties, and occupation types but some are consistent across all areas. Utilize this guide as a foundational piece in your research of the veterinary career field.

Internship – Internships in the field of veterinary medicine are typically one-year long assignments after graduating with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. Internships are hosted at both public/educational institutions and private practices. Often internships preclude residency (although not for all specialties) on the path to specializing in a certain field. Most internships are run through the Veterinary Internship & Residency Matching Program (VIRMP) on <https://www.virmp.org/> and some are organized outside of the VIRMP.

Match/VIRMP – The ‘Match’ is the internship and residency placement process through the Veterinary Internship & Residency Matching Program (VIRMP). It includes a great number of internship and residency opportunities but others can be found outside the Match. The terms are commonly used interchangeably. The typical application process and cycle can be found on their website <https://www.virmp.org/>

Clinics/Clinical Rotations – These are single or multiple week long assignments of DVM students to various departments of a clinical teaching hospital. This is a required portion of the DVM training and curriculum.

Clerkships - Clerkships are similar to clinical rotations in that they are single or multiple week long assignments for DVM students, however clerkships are typically held off-site of the clinical teaching hospital. Sometimes they are held at various farms, large animal practices, emergency centers, or private practices.

Residency - A residency is typically completed after a yearlong internship (although not for all specialties). Residencies usually are discipline specific (anesthesiology, oncology, anatomic pathology, etc.). This is a three year commitment to further education training typically resulting in the individual applying for boarding within the specialty.

Externship - Externship definitions vary by schools. Typically they are 2-4 week experiences for DVM students at a clinical practice in which the student learns and potentially participates in the organization. Externships can be done for academic credit or for non-academic credit.

Preceptorship – Preceptorships also vary by school. They are typically a 6 or 8 week "externship". The student is spending time onsite with a pre-approved hospital, but the length of time is longer than a typical externship.

Industry – Industry is typically referred to those food, medical and pharmaceutical organizations that do not focus on clinical practice. These organizations may have sales, recruitment, educational, research or another focus.

Clinical Practice – Clinical practices, including both private and corporate hospitals, are the most common type of practices, in these DVMs see animal patients that clients bring in for treatment or wellness.

Private Practice – Private practices have a DVM that treats and/or diagnoses animal patients that are owned by an individual or a group of individuals.

Public Practice – Public practice entails a DVM that treats and/or diagnoses animal patients that typically do not have an owning person or organization. Typically these are managed by a nonprofit or government entity (ex. Humane Society).

Corporate Practice – Corporate practice is typically referring to clinical practices that is owned by a company or organization. There are many different types of corporate practices and policies and procedures that vary across corporate practices.

Small Animal – Small Animal refers to primarily cats and dogs.

Ruminant Animal – Ruminants are animal that process their food in a specialized stomach prior to digestion. Ruminants include cattle and "small ruminants" which is typically the term used to refer to goats, sheep, deer, etc.

Companion Animal – Companion Animal typically refers to dogs and cats but can also include other animals that owners keep as pets.

Large Animal – Large animal typically refers to animals that would be found on a farm including sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs among others. This can sometimes include exotic animals that are not kept as pets or farm animals.

Mixed Animal – Mixed Animal includes both small and large animal groups.

Equine – Equine is usually referred to separately outside of Large Animal and Farm Animal and only includes horses.

Food Animal – Food Animal refers to animals, such as cattle, that humans use for food or food products.

Exotics – Exotics are any animal that is not categorized in small, large or farm animal groups. This can include pocket pets, zoo animals, aquatic animals, and wildlife.

Wildlife – Wildlife is referred to any animal that is found in the wild and does not have an owning person or organization. Wildlife support is typically run through non-profit organizations or government entities.