



So you think you want to go Vet School Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know veterinary medicine is the right career for me?

The best way to know for sure is to gain exposure to the profession through experiences with practicing veterinarians and/or veterinary researchers. In addition to a sincere concern for animals, an aptitude for science, and good people skills, veterinary school applicants must have a realistic understanding of the veterinary profession. Exploring the profession by shadowing or working for a veterinarian is the best way to learn and understand what is involved in the veterinary profession and whether veterinary medicine is the right career for you.

2. Where can I get further information about a career in veterinary medicine?

More information is available from the [American Veterinary Medical Association](http://www.avma.org) or the [Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges \(AAVMC\)](http://www.aavmc.org).

3. How can I easily access a list of all of the colleges of veterinary medicine and their requirements?

Access the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS) website <http://www.aavmc.org> The [Prerequisites Chart](#) for Veterinary Colleges (found on the VASCI website under undergraduate>pre-vet major) indicates the requirements for 33 U.S. schools and 13 foreign schools. The chart includes hyper-links to the requirement list found on each school's website. The [Veterinary College requirements](#) (found on the VASCI website under undergraduate>pre-vet major) for admission lists the prerequisite courses. Additional information can be found in a book published by the AAVMC titled *Veterinary Medical School Admission requirements in the United States and Canada (VMSAR)*. To order this book, visit the [AAVMC website](http://www.aavmc.org). (<http://www.aavmc.org>)

4. How competitive is the applicant pool for veterinary school nationally?

There are only 33 colleges of veterinary medicine in the United States. Over ten thousand applicants vie for the approximately 3300 seats available each year. Admission to these programs is extremely competitive so you should strive to exceed the minimum requirements. To get a feel for the competitiveness of the applicant pool, some schools post last year's entering class statistics; reviewing these statistics for the schools you are interested in will help you to have a better understanding of the requirements and selection criteria. In recent years, UMass graduates have attended Tufts University, Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, Iowa State University, and many others.

5. Can I apply to Vet Schools outside the United States?

Yes, there are AAVMC accredited colleges of veterinary medicine outside the United States. In recent years, UMass graduates have attended University of Edinburgh in Scotland, Royal University in London, UK, Ross University on the island of St. Kitts, St. George's University on the island of Grenada, Atlantic Veterinary College at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada, and others.

6. How can I improve my chances of admission?

The admissions committees and counselors will be looking for students who: are academically curious, competent (especially in science course work), and sincerely motivated, have developed time and stress management skills, are community minded and have demonstrated leadership abilities, are effective communicators, have excellent interpersonal communication skills, have demonstrated teamwork ability and who have realistically evaluated their plans for financing their education since demands of the professional curriculum usually preclude part-time employment during school sessions. Students who are interested in veterinary medicine should pursue experience with employment (paid and volunteer), research, clubs and other activities that expose them to the profession and to different species of animals. A variety of veterinary and animal experience is highly recommended.

7. Is a Bachelor's degree required for admission?

Most veterinary colleges do not require that a Bachelor's degree be completed for admission although most accepted applicants have a Bachelor's degree or an advanced degree (Master's or Ph.D.) A very few outstanding applicants (1-2 percent) are accepted (to some schools) having completed only the pre-veterinary requirements.

The Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine located in Grafton, Massachusetts offers undergraduates enrolled at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst an opportunity to apply to the DVM program in March of their sophomore year. A limited number of students are admitted, and upon acceptance, are guaranteed a space in Tufts veterinary school class after they graduate, if they maintain a minimum 3.4 GPA and take the required prerequisite classes. To be eligible to apply, candidates for this program must be sophomores and must have completed a full year each of introductory biology and chemistry. SAT scores will be evaluated in the place of GRE scores. Freshmen contemplating application to the Early Acceptance Program are encouraged to speak with a pre-veterinary advisor about accruing veterinary medical related experiences. If the applicant is not accepted, the applicant can make an appointment with a Tufts admission counselor in the summer to review his/her application, in order to strengthen it for the next round of veterinary medical school applications. Further information regarding this program can be viewed at the Tufts website. <http://www.tufts.edu/vet/academic/earlyacceptance.html>.

8. Must I complete all required courses before I can apply?

All schools allow candidates to apply before completing all required courses (you should be submitting your applications in September of your senior year). An applicant who is admitted without evidence of completion of all requirements will receive a provisional admission.

Evidence of satisfactory completion of requirements must be received (at most schools) by July 15 prior to the fall of matriculating in the DVM program.

9. Does it matter where I obtain my undergraduate degree?

No, but it will be necessary for you to take the required prerequisite courses, and you will need to provide evidence that you can handle a rigorous upper division science curriculum. It would be to your advantage to select an institution that offers the required courses plus additional upper division science courses as part of an undergraduate degree program. The UMass program is specifically designed to meet all the necessary requirements.

10. Is there a preferred undergraduate major?

Your choice of a degree-oriented major depends on your academic and vocational interests within veterinary medicine and on your alternate career plans. It is possible to fulfill pre-veterinary requirements and at the same time complete departmental requirements for almost any science major; however, students can have any degree as long as they have completed required courses. Since most pre-veterinary students are interested in the biological sciences and/or in working with animals, they tend to major either in sciences applied to working with animals (e.g., animal sciences, wildlife biology) or in basic sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, zoology). Students are encouraged to select a baccalaureate program as early as possible in order to fulfill the requirements of their chosen departmental major. Selection of a major is also important for establishing alternative goals and/or for enhancing specific career options.

11. How can I be sure that the courses I take will fulfill the pre-veterinary requirements?

The University of Massachusetts Pre-Veterinary Science major curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of most veterinary schools. However, after selection of the school(s) you wish to attend, it is recommended that you consult each school's catalog or website for specific requirements to ensure that you are meeting all the requirements. If there is a prerequisite listed that UMass does not appear to offer, it is recommended that you check with your academic advisor.

12. Is there an advantage in taking more science courses than the minimum prerequisites?

The first two years of study in veterinary medicine consist of challenging science course work. Students will find it beneficial to have had as much science course work in their undergraduate studies as possible, especially biological sciences.

13. What electives should I take?

Suggested electives include: anatomy, physiology, cell biology, microbiology, biochemistry, genetics, nutrition, immunology, epidemiology, histology, embryology, parasitology, virology, animal reproduction, animal husbandry, toxicology, parasitology, mycology, endocrinology, entomology, bacteriology, zoology, neuroanatomy, or neurophysiology. Courses, practica, independent studies and internships that provide specific veterinary practice, animal experience and research experiences are highly recommended. In addition, many schools recommend business, computer science, statistics, and communications courses.

Professional veterinary curriculum is extremely demanding, it is highly recommended that prospective students enroll in challenging undergraduate courses that go beyond the pre-professional requirements; useful courses include comparative anatomy, embryology, and physiology. Superior performance in these kinds of courses will not only enhance the academic image of the applicant but will also help build a solid base for more detailed courses in the professional veterinary curriculum.

Methods of observation and collection of data, evaluation, deduction, and interpretation of findings are extremely important. The analysis and organization of a set of observations into its simple components and synthesis of many fragments of data into a working hypothesis on which a plan of action can be based are critical. The student should keep these objectives in mind throughout pre-professional training. Courses that might be helpful in this area include physics, psychology, and other sciences. Independent study research projects are ideally suited to honing these skills.

A high degree of skill in the use of spoken and written language should be developed to communicate a story effectively and accurately, to record facts systematically for the use of others, and to transmit instructions precisely. Proficiency in accurate, rapid, interpretive reading should also be mastered. Courses that might be helpful in this area include English literature, English composition, and foreign languages. The study of foreign languages enhances appreciation of the exact meaning of words and the use of subtle differences in shading.

14. In evaluating my grades, will the fact that I took a heavy course load (honors, non-required challenging courses, etc.) or worked while attending classes be considered?

Yes, Admissions Committees understand that there are differences in the way academic histories are established. They will evaluate the quality of each applicant's academic program as well as grades earned in college courses. Credit load, workload and rigor of curriculum will be considered. Conversely, those who have a pattern of incompletes or withdrawals from difficult courses, who regularly took low credit loads (without concurrently working), or who minimally fulfill requirements, will be acknowledged as having a lower quality of academic program.

15. Is there a minimum GPA or GRE requirement?

This varies by school. Some schools do set minimum GPA and GRE scores, check the websites. All admissions committees consider the "whole package" (i.e., GPA, GRE scores, Casper evaluation, animal and pre-veterinary experience, extra-curricular involvement, community service, etc.) Some schools focus on the last 45 semester hours completed because typically, the last 45 hours are composed of upper division courses. Some schools have a formula which is usually outlined in their admissions information. The following is one example:

50% – Academic History and Experience – Prerequisite GPA, GRE, undergraduate institution selectivity, academic load, number of withdrawals, research participation, teaching assistant positions, strength of academic references (if any), and academic flags/concerns.

25% – Pre-Veterinary Experience and Preparation – Amount of legitimate pre-veterinary experience, amount of legitimate animal experience, strength of veterinary and animal related references, relationship between references and veterinary/animal experiences.

25% – Overall Professionalism and Readiness to Matriculate – Overall professionalism of the application, strength of written communication skills, extracurricular experiences, community involvement, international experiences, awards and recognitions, non-veterinary or animal related employment experiences.

16. What classes should I take in high school to prepare to be a veterinarian some day?

Veterinary Schools will **not** review your high school records for admission unless you took college courses during high school. However, you should take upper level, honors, A.P. and all college preparation courses necessary for freshman admission into an undergraduate institution. It is important to have a strong background in mathematics, especially pre-calculus and calculus. Veterinary schools are interested in any work (volunteer or paid) you did with animals and/or veterinarians during high school; it is highly recommended that you seek out such work and document/journal this work.

17. Must I have worked for a veterinarian?

In choosing applicants, Admissions Committees look for those who have gained an understanding of animals and of the veterinary profession through participation in such activities as 4H, Medical Explorer Scouts, and through paid or volunteer work on farms or ranches, in kennels, animal shelters, laboratories, zoos, aquariums, and/or veterinary clinics. If you are lacking practical experience in working with animals or in the veterinary medical field, it would be to your advantage to acquire the experience as soon as possible. Upon application to veterinary school, a reference from a veterinarian is required by most schools and highly recommended by others. Applicants should become acquainted with a veterinarian who would be able to evaluate motivation toward and understanding of the profession. Most applicants have worked (either for pay or as a volunteer) with a veterinarian in order to gain a realistic perspective of professional veterinary service. You should list all such work experiences on the application even if the work was done voluntarily or for course credit. Keep in mind that veterinarians work in many different settings. Exposure to non-practice careers is also helpful.

18. How much pre-vet experience should I have before I apply?

This varies by school. Many schools do recommend a minimum number of hours of experience working with veterinarians, preferably in a practice setting. Veterinary medical colleges prefer applicants with an open mind about animal species since their mission is to teach the material that you will be tested on the Veterinary Licensing Exam in your fourth year of veterinary school. Thus, it is a mistake to have two or three out of your three veterinary experiences centered on small animals or horses, even if you think that's what you will specialize in as a veterinarian. Conversely, if you are interested in a veterinary specialty (e.g. zoo medicine), make sure you gain experience in that area. It is recommended that you diversify your experience by seeking experiences in three of the following four areas: a) Large animal, b) Small animal, c) Wildlife/conservation, d) Laboratory research. Each experience should be at least 200 hours. These experiences can be pursued during the school year or in the summer; it might be easier to find an opening in a veterinary clinic near your home rather than near Amherst, where you'll be competing with all the other pre-vet students. Summer experiences may also be more exotic

(i.e. internship at an aquarium). These experiences are required so that the veterinary colleges are assured that you have a comprehensive grasp of the veterinary medical profession and so that you can cultivate contacts who will write superlative letters of recommendation for you. Document your experiences so that you can fill in details on your applications years later. All types of experience should be included in your application and curriculum vitae (CV) or resume, including, but not limited to: paid experience, volunteering, shadowing, etc. The type of experience, level of responsibility, and what the experience taught you about the veterinary profession are all considered in the evaluation. To count toward veterinary experience, you must be under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. If you are not under the supervision of a veterinarian, the experience is considered animal experience.

19. Why should I participate in extracurricular activities?

Since almost all animals treated by veterinarians have human owners with whom the veterinarian must communicate effectively, the profession seeks new members who are not only interested in animals, but who also enjoy a high level of contact with people. Involvement outside the classroom in activities such as clubs or in service organizations gives evidence of social skills and enjoyment of social contact with other people, leadership ability, motivation and energy and a desire to serve the community.

20. How long will I be attending veterinary medical college?

Most veterinary schools require four years of study and practice.

21. How much does it cost to attend veterinary school?

This varies by school. It is recommended that you check each school's tuition, fees and scholarship opportunities carefully and consider the cost of housing, transportation, etc. Most schools have different rates for residents or students from states that have contract agreements with the school. The VMCAS website has a good list of suggestions for loans and scholarship opportunities. <http://www.aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Funding-Education.aspx>

Below are various links on how to manage your student finances and on scholarships and federal and state loan repayment programs, in exchange for practicing in areas that are underserved (see map). Some of these areas are in the Northeast- for example, UConn has a position for a Veterinary Pathology resident. The only caveat is that all federal and state programs are subject to the budgetary process.

<https://www.avma.org/about/savma/studentfinancialresources/pages/default.aspx>

<https://www.avma.org/About/SAVMA/StudentFinancialResources/Pages/Scholarship-Loan-Repayment-and-Forgiveness-Programs.aspx>

NIFA USDA shortage areas map - https://nifa.usda.gov/vmlrp-map?state=535&field_status_value=All&field_vsgp_status_value=All&fy%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2018&=Apply

US Army - <https://www.goarmy.com/amedd/health-care/benefits.html>

The following website has current information comparing veterinary school costs.

<http://www.vinfoundation.org/AppUtil/document/default.aspx?pid=0&catid=&objectid=21833&objecttypeid=10&redirectFromMiscDefault=1>

You can also access these sites:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?key=0AuDAmocjP-XddEZfZ096NkxsMkdKVmJsUHZ3MmRqUFE&output=html>

<http://www.vinfoundation.org/AppUtil/document/default.aspx?pid=0&catid=&objectid=21833&objecttypeid=10&redirectFromMiscDefault=1>

22. How much do first year veterinarians earn?

The AVMA publishes new starting salary figures every year, in general, the highest starting salaries are in the small animal specialist field. The lowest are in the equine specialist field. The salary for residents is lower than that for vets in clinical practice, but residencies are necessary to enter the higher paid specialties.

Sources:

<http://www.aavmc.org>

<http://vetmed.iastate.edu/academics/prospective-students/admissions/frequently-asked-questions>

<http://cvm.msu.edu/student-information/dvm-program-admissions/frequently-asked-questions>

<http://csu-cvmb.colostate.edu/dvm-program/>

<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/education/>

<http://education.vetmed.ufl.edu/admissions/>

http://www.cvm.msstate.edu/academics/faq_about_admission.html

<http://www.cvm.ncsu.edu/student-services/admissions-faq.html>

<http://vet.osu.edu/education/professional-dvm-program-admissions>

<http://www.cvm.missouri.edu/prep-undergrad.htm>

<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/prospectivestudents/Faq.aspx>

<http://prospective.westernu.edu/veterinary/faqs-17/>

