



**BVNA**  
British Veterinary  
Nursing Association

# Who is **CARING FOR YOUR PET?**



**Veterinary nurses play an important role in the care of your pet and are a vital member of the veterinary team. They carry out technical work and are skilled in undertaking a range of diagnostic tests, medical treatments and minor surgical procedures, under veterinary surgeon direction.**

**Veterinary nurses also advise on keeping pets healthy and in many practices run their own nursing consultations and out-patient checks. This information leaflet gives you some insight into their responsibilities and the various nursing roles you may come across in practice.**

## **TYPES OF VETERINARY NURSE**

You may come across different types of veterinary nurse in your vet practice. They may wear a range of different uniforms and it is important to be aware of the tasks that each is allowed to undertake. Qualified nurses will often wear a dark green uniform, while the student nurse uniform is usually white with green stripes. Your practice may have a poster in the waiting room that explains the colour uniforms their staff wear. The veterinary nursing profession is currently moving towards full regulation, with all qualified veterinary nurses being required to be listed with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and able to use the title RVN (Registered Veterinary Nurse) after their name. Only Registered Veterinary Nurses can legally carry out certain procedures within practice.



## **THE REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSE (RVN)**

This means that the holder's name has been registered on the non-statutory Register for Veterinary Nurses, held by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Their registration demonstrates to employers and the general public that they are keeping their skills up-to date and are accountable for their professional conduct.

## **THE ADVANCED DIPLOMA VETERINARY NURSE**

Some RVNs decide to undertake a further period of study specialising in certain areas such as anaesthesia, radiography or intensive care. This training, which normally takes a further two years, leads to a Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and successful recipients are entitled to use the post nominals Dip AVN (Small Animal) after the RVN title.

## **NURSING ASSISTANTS**

The nursing assistant helps the qualified nursing team with their duties. This can include exercising and feeding your pet, cleaning the kennel, helping with handling and giving lots of TLC. Although they do not require a specific qualification to carry out these tasks, most practices enrol their staff in recognised courses leading to the Animal Nursing Assistant (ANA) or Veterinary Care Assistant (VCA) qualification.



Photo: Plumpton College



## IN-PATIENT CARE

RVNs are responsible for carrying out nursing care whilst working with the veterinary surgeon in charge of the case. Like nurses in NHS hospitals they undertake a wide range of tasks such as administering medication, wound management and monitoring intravenous fluids as well as looking after the needs of the patient.

## SURGICAL NURSING & ANAESTHESIA

RVNs are trained to assist the veterinary surgeon both as part of the surgical team and by monitoring the levels of patient anaesthesia throughout the operation. They are trained to recognise different stages of anaesthesia and potential problems. RVNs can also legally undertake minor surgical procedures such as the suturing of wounds as well as dental scaling and polishing following assessment and removal of any damaged teeth by the vet.

## NURSE CLINICS

Just like the Doctor's surgery, the majority of veterinary practices now run nurse-led clinics at least two or three times a week if not on a daily basis. These will vary between practices, but common areas include weight management, dressing changes, post-operative checks and suture removal, puppy training and socialisation classes, microchipping and diabetic clinics.

## DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES

Many laboratory tests are performed in-house by RVNs. Once the test is complete, the findings will be relayed to the veterinary surgeon in charge of the case, who will interpret them and discuss the results with you. Radiographs (x-rays) can be a crucial aid to the diagnosis of illness or injury and RVNs are trained to take and process x-rays as requested by the veterinary surgeon.

If you have further questions about veterinary nurses and the care of your pet, talk to your local veterinary practice. You can also contact the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) or the VN Department at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

The British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA): [www.bvna.org.uk](http://www.bvna.org.uk)

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS): [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

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