

# Working and studying as a veterinary nurse in...

## The United States



Many overseas veterinary technicians travel and work in the United States. The most important things to be aware of are that:

Veterinary technicians are regulated by state, and credentialing requirements and job tasks allowed vary. Many states designate graduation from a program accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and passing the Veterinary Technician National Examination (VTNE) to be the qualification for credentialing.

Visitors from most other countries will require a visa to work in the United States.

### **What national veterinary technician qualifications are available?**

There are two nationally recognized academic veterinary nursing / technician degrees available in the United States:

Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Technology (BS)  
Associate of Science in Veterinary Technology (AS)

As of January 2016, there are a total of 231 AVMA accredited programs, of which 23 offer a BS degree, and 9 are distance learning. There are no AVMA accredited programs in the state of Alaska, District of Columbia, and Montana.

Those with the above degrees qualify to take the VTNE to qualify for credentialing.

Credential governance of veterinary technicians are instituted at the state level, and are at a variable status.

- No credentialing – There is no regulation by private or governmental entities.
- Voluntary credentialing – Private organizations, such as the state veterinary technician association has instituted voluntary credentialing, scope of practice, and enforce maintenance requirements.
- Compulsory credentialing – A governmental agency governs the credential and dictate scope of practice through legislated practice acts.

Voluntary credentials are typically termed Certified Veterinary Technician, or CVT. Compulsory credentialing can be termed Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT), or Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT) depending on the degree of responsibility placed on the credential.

In the state of Tennessee, the credential is called Licensed Veterinary Medical Technician, or LVMT.

## **Do I need to hold the credential to be able to work as a veterinary technician?**

This varies by state. In states that have written title protection for veterinary technicians in the practice act, the credential is required to practice as a veterinary technician to perform tasks as outlined in the state's practice act.

In states without title protection, or states that lack verbiage regarding veterinary technicians in the practice act, a non-credentialed individual can perform the same job task as a credentialed veterinary technician.

## **Will my overseas veterinary nursing qualification be recognized?**

Recognition of overseas qualifications vary by state and the language of the practice act. Some states will grant reciprocity in credentialing, with most requiring a passing score of the VTNE. Some states specify the need for graduation from an AVMA accredited program, thereby preventing transferring of overseas qualifications.

Checking with the state's veterinary medical board for reciprocity policies is recommended.

## **Do I need to be registered to work as a veterinary nurse?**

This varies by state. In states that have written title protection for veterinary technicians in the practice act, the credential is required to practice as a veterinary technician to perform tasks as outlined in the state's practice act.

In states without title protection, or states that lack verbiage regarding veterinary technicians in the practice act, a non-credentialed individual can perform the same job task as a credentialed veterinary technician.

## **How do I find work as a veterinary nurse?**

Employment opportunities for veterinary nurses can be found in a number of ways; advertisements in newspapers, employment section of the AVMA or NAVTA website, veterinary employment companies, classified sections in veterinary magazines / journals and word of mouth. Alternatively you can deliver your resume to veterinary clinics to hold on file in case any opportunities arise.

## **How do I find out about pay and working conditions?**

In the first instance, this information should be available through your employer. You and your employer will need to negotiate a contract and a job description for your employment (the job description is often included as part of the contract). You should receive a summary of your pay and deductions every pay day.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics periodically publishes census information of professions, with the most recent report published in May 2014.

(<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes292056.htm>)

### **Is there a national association for veterinary nurses?**

Yes, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) is the national body for veterinary technicians in the United States. See [www.navta.net](http://www.navta.net) for more information.

### **Can I be a registered / listed veterinary nurse if I have an overseas qualification?**

The requirement varies from state to state, and each state's credentialing body should be contacted for the most up-to-date information. The information on the credentialing organization for specific states can be obtained by contacting NAVTA at [www.navta.net](http://www.navta.net).

### **What are the immigration requirements to work as a veterinary nurse?**

In order to work in the United States international visitors will require either a work or residency visa.

Contact your local United States Embassy or visit the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website (<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/working-us>) for more information.