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NAVTA Policy on Veterinary Assistant Training Programs Curriculum and Assessment of Skills

Introduction

Credentialed Veterinary Technicians work more efficiently when they have an individual who can assist them in the completion of their responsibilities. Therefore, NAVTA recognizes the vital role of veterinary assistants on the veterinary health care team and further understands that assistants may be more effective/efficient if they are provided formal training in certain tasks. Veterinary Assistant training programs must emphasize the role of all members of the team and are responsible for educating both students and their potential employers on proper delegation to the assistant. Any tasks delegated to the assistant must be under the direct supervision of the veterinarian or veterinary technician.

Role of the Members of the Veterinary Health Care Team

NAVTA supports the following terminology pertaining to the titles of the members of the veterinary health care team:

“Veterinary Technician Specialists” (VTS). These individuals possess advanced certification from a specialty organization recognized by NAVTA.

“Veterinary Technology” is the science and art of providing professional support service to veterinarians in the practice of their profession.

“Veterinary Technician” is a person who has graduated from a two- or three-year, AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology and passed the Veterinary Technician National Examination. They are credentialed as a Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT), Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT), or Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT), depending on the jurisdiction.

“Veterinary Technologist” is a graduate of a four-year, AVMA-accredited program who holds a baccalaureate degree from such study and holds credentials per the state or jurisdiction.

“Laboratory Animal Technician” is a person whose academic training, knowledge and skills have been limited to laboratory animals.

The adjectives, “animal,” “veterinary,” “ward,” or “hospital” combined with the nouns “attendant,” “caretaker,” or “assistant” are titles sometimes used for individuals where training, knowledge, and skills are less extensive than that required for identification as a veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, or laboratory animal technician.

NAVTA firmly believes the term "Veterinary Technician" is limited to those individuals who have obtained:

- Education from an AVMA accredited Veterinary Technology program, **AND**
- Passing score on the Veterinary Technician National Examination (VTNE), **AND**
- Holds current credentials as a Licensed, Registered, or Certified Veterinary Technician.
- **OR** holds credentials by passing the VTNE **PRIOR** to the change instituted by the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) January 1, 2010 (utilized the grandfathering allowance to sit for the VTNE for experienced individuals--No longer an option).

Essential Requirements for Assistant Programs

1. Courses to accomplish the training of assistants may be offered through high schools, adult education or certificate programs at community colleges or career colleges, and distance-learning programs.

2. Minimum requirements include a letter obtaining the approval or affiliation with an AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology. This affiliation should be one which encourages the acquiring of additional education beyond the assistant level for those individuals that choose to continue on with a career in veterinary technology. The letter should outline the VT program's recognition of the Assistant Program curriculum and training; visits from the VT program students or faculty are encouraged.

3. A working relationship should be developed with the national and state Veterinary Technician Associations. Individuals from these associations are encouraged to participate in the Veterinary Assistant Program's Advisory Committee.

4. The Veterinary Assistant Program program courses must be taught and student skills evaluated by credentialed veterinary technicians and/or licensed veterinarians.

5. Total Contact Hours, Credits, and time to complete program:

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2018: Program hours must include 150 hours of didactic academic training plus a required 100 hours of externship/ clinical experience outside of the school/ program's training facility working on unfamiliar animals. These 100 hours may be divided at various veterinary clinical experiences but must include at least part of the hours observing and externing at a veterinary clinic or hospital practicing Veterinary Assistant skills under the direction of an extern/ clinical site supervisor. Additional experiences may include: volunteering at an animal shelter walking, feeding, and socializing animals; working at a low-cost vaccination or altering procedure clinic restraining animals for Licensed Veterinary Professionals; or other services where the student extern will be working on unfamiliar animals practicing restraint, vital sign determination, and other nursing skills within the scope of the Veterinary Assistant. In order to give current programs time to meet this guideline, current programs will be required to provide this externship as part of their program by the time of their first renewal following July 1, 2018.

The program will need to provide the externship/ clinical experience documents including, but not limited to: a sample of an affiliation agreement with an extern site; the hours tracking sheet for the student extern to track their hours completion; any skill checklist utilized at the extern site; and the program's form for evaluating the student performance while performing extern skills/ obtaining clinical experiences.

6. The curriculum should be task oriented and additional basic tasks may be added to the skills list but must not encroach on essential areas of study for veterinary technicians. (Please see the following Essential Skills for Assistant Training)

7. A mechanism must be in place to evaluate the student's progress both on the didactic material and hands-on skills **prior** to the student moving to clinical experience.

- Hands on experience during the program must involve exposure to the equipment and supplies needed to adequately train the assistant with the Vet Assistant Essential Skills listed below.
- Hands-on experience and skill demonstration must also include the handling of live small animals during the program coursework with proper supervision to ensure safety for the animal handler and to the animal.

In order for the novice Veterinary Assistant to learn proper restraint and handling skills and to ensure the graduate is competent at a beginner level, NAVTA firmly believes the Veterinary Assistant student should be exposed to the handling of live small animals as part of the curriculum and training.

8. It is vital the program have a policy in place to ensure all students/ graduates are competent in the skill set and that individuals who cannot meet the minimum requirements are not allowed to graduate until the minimum academic and clinical experience is met.

9. NAVTA encourages the program to expose veterinary assistant students to certain large and exotic animals; however, the committee recognizes the limitation of availability for all programs, thus the notation *optional* on the Essential Skills regarding these species.

10. It is vital the Veterinary Assistant Program Director have the ability to initiate change in Curriculum, Hands-on training protocols, and have the authority to correct any deficiencies noted.

Tasks Appropriate to Delegate to the Assistant

When identifying those tasks which are appropriate for a veterinary assistant to complete, the determining factor in assigning tasks to the assistant is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome. In developing the following list of tasks which the assistant may be trained to perform, each task was evaluated for appropriateness based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

1. What is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome?
2. Could/would the average client be able to perform the task?
3. Does it change the physiologic state of the patient?
4. Does the information obtained impact the veterinarian's diagnosis?

It is essential to remember that the completion of all assistant tasks requires some degree of supervision either by the veterinarian or the credentialed veterinary technician.

The following delineation of tasks, appropriate for delegation to the assistant on the veterinary health care team, was developed through a cooperative effort between NAVTA, the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators (AVTE), and the AVMA's Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (CVTEA).

Educating assistants on tasks beyond the scope of this list is discouraged and may impact the ability of the program to receive the status of NAVTA Approved Veterinary Assistant Program. Graduates of non-approved programs will not be able to sit for the Approved Veterinary Assistant Examination and will not be able to receive Certification from NAVTA.