

## SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO VETERINARY MEDICINE

### DESCRIPTION OF SESSION

This session provides participants with an introductory understanding of the diverse field of veterinary medicine and the various veterinary roles in this health care profession.

### CATEGORY

- Health
- Veterinary Medicine

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the different roles of veterinarians, veterinary health technicians, and other specialists.
- Understand the human–animal bond and the role the veterinarian plays in this bond.
- Understand the different types of facilities used in veterinary medicine and the types of care provided at these different facilities.
- Understand the educational requirements for veterinarians, including beneficial high school and college courses.
- Identify some of the challenges and benefits of being a veterinarian.
- Learn about the veterinary technician’s role in veterinary medicine.
- Tour a veterinary facility or clinic.

### SUPPLIES

- Laptop computer or equipment to view videos
- Veterinary careers video (See activity 2 for a suggested video available for purchase and information about other resources.)

### ADVISOR NOTE:

The introductory information/concepts in italics below should be shared with participants. As you engage your post in activities each meeting, please include comments, discussions, and feedback to the group relating to **Character, Leadership, and Ethics**. These are important attributes that make a difference in the success of youth in the workplace and in life.

### ACTIVITIES

#### Introduction

Tell participants: *In the field of veterinary medicine, the veterinarian is a doctor who may primarily provide medical and surgical care to animals or may work in the many areas of public health. These areas may include working to control diseases that can pass between animals and man (called zoonotic diseases), teaching, doing research, or working in countless other areas of science and health care.*

*Some veterinarians specialize in the medical and surgical care of companion animals (pets), food-producing (large/farm) animals, wildlife/zoo animals, marine mammals, fish, or birds. Even in each area of animal care there are specialty areas for advanced training in fields such as the following:*

- *Internal medicine (oncology, cardiology, immunology, endocrinology, etc.)*
- *Surgery (soft tissue, orthopedic, reconstructive, etc.)*
- *Pathology*
- *Diagnostic imaging (radiology, ultrasound, CT scans, etc.)*
- *Behavior, genetics, nutrition, etc.*

*Veterinary medicine is both a science and an art. Veterinary medical practice requires a detailed knowledge of many academic disciplines beginning in high school with math, chemistry, biology and physics, and leading to studies in college and veterinary school of anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, and the underlying causes of diseases and treatments.*

*In addition to a degree of self-sacrifice, veterinary medicine requires good communication skills, business management skills (in some cases), the ability to work with other people, as well as compassion for both people and animals.*

*Another supporting career in the field of veterinary medicine is the registered veterinary technician, or “vet tech” for short. This individual serves in a nursing capacity in veterinary medicine and is certified in many areas and procedures. (Veterinary technicians are covered in a later session.)*

## **ACTIVITY 1**

### **Speaker: Introduction to the Profession**

Have the speaker address these topics:

- An overview of the clinical side of the veterinary profession, including the various different areas of clinical practice (companion animal, large/food-producing animal, wildlife, marine mammal, fish, and avian)
- An overview of the ancillary areas of the veterinary profession, including public health and zoonotic disease surveillance and control, the military, food safety and inspection (U.S. Department of Agriculture, or USDA), laboratory animal medicine and research, teaching, research, and government (covered in later sessions)
- The veterinarian’s role to the community as a volunteer in the community
- The human–animal bond and the role the veterinarian plays in this bond
- Training pathways of veterinarians with an emphasis on high school and college requirements, stressing the importance of high school math, chemistry, biology and physics courses
- The role of the registered veterinary technician (RVT) or animal health technician (AHT) and the training required to become one
- Time for questions and answers, with an emphasis on academic challenges in high school and college

## ACTIVITY 2

### Veterinary Careers

- Show a video about veterinary careers.
  - The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has a 29-minute DVD, “Veterinary Medicine: It’s More Than You Think,” available for purchase [here](#). Additional AVMA resources are also available for purchase [on their site](#).
  - Another option is to search for appropriate, high-quality videos online. Select videos from a reputable online source or other resource. [PetCARE TV](#) offers a number of [videos](#) you may find useful. View the videos in advance to make sure they are appropriate.
- Lead a discussion following the video.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Ethics and Responsibilities

- Lead a discussion about ethics in veterinary medicine. What are ethics? Why are they important in character development? How would you decide if an action you took or a decision you made was ethical?
- Discuss the ethical guidelines a veterinarian must live by. Why are these important for both the veterinarian and the veterinarian/client/patient relationship?
- Have a discussion about ways a veterinarian could discuss euthanasia with a client.

## ACTIVITY 4

### Tour

- Tour an animal care facility, observe an animal demonstration (K-9 unit, wildlife rehabilitator, USDA contraband-sniffing dogs at an airport, demonstration by a mounted policeman, etc.); watch a farrier shoeing a horse; or visit a zoo, dog breeder’s kennel, cattery, dairy farm, beef ranch/feedlot, pet store, or a veterinary facility/hospital.
- Allow time for Explorers to ask questions following the tour.

## ADVISOR NOTE

Some sample questions are below. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions that relate to your post or specific focus area.

## REFLECTION

- *Which area of veterinary medicine interests you most?*
- *What did you learn about the number and types of roles in veterinary medicine?*

- *What is the significance of the human-animal bond?*
  - *Why are ethics important to a veterinarian?*
  - *What can you do now, during your time as a student, to prepare yourself for a career in veterinary medicine? Why is this topic important?*
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