

Veterinarian

Doctor for animals. Eight years of school at one of five colleges, heavy debt, real emotional strain, and strong demand.

TYPICAL PAY

\$125,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$71k to \$175k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Small animal clinics, farms, emergency hospitals, government

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Grade 12 biology, chemistry, physics, math and English with top marks.
- 2 University prerequisites** 2 to 4 years
 Schools require at least 2 years of science courses. In practice most successful applicants finish a full degree first, with a high average and hundreds of hours of animal and veterinary experience.
- 3 DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) degree** 4 years
 Four years at one of only five colleges in Canada. Every species: dogs, cats, horses, cattle, pigs, poultry, exotics. The final year is clinical rotations.
- 4 Write the NAVLE (North American Veterinary Licensing Exam)** Final year
 The same exam used in the US. Written in the final year of the degree.
- 5 Get your provincial licence** A few weeks
 For example from the CVO (College of Veterinarians of Ontario). Then you can practise.

Pros and cons

- + Strong demand and rising pay across Canada
- + Enormous variety: species, surgery, medicine, public health
- + Deeply respected job with real meaning
- Eight years of school and heavy debt against a modest starting salary
- Euthanasia, grief, and clients who cannot pay wear on you
- Rates of burnout and suicidal thoughts are well above average in the profession

Optional boosts

Board-certified specialist. Emergency and critical care. Large animal and rural practice. Practice ownership.

Good to know

Canada's oldest vet school

The Ontario Veterinary College opened in Toronto in 1862 and moved to Guelph in 1922. It is the oldest veterinary school in Canada and one of the oldest in North America.

Only a few hundred new vets a year

The five Canadian colleges graduate only a few hundred veterinarians a year combined, for a country with millions of pets and a huge farm sector. That is the root of the shortage.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Veterinarians, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
 CVMA National Examining Board: Schedule of fees
 Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/veterinarian>



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