

## **BECOMING A VETERINARY TECHNICIAN SPECIALIST**

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### **Introduction**

Due to a growing interest among veterinary technicians to attain a higher level of recognition for advanced knowledge and skills in specific disciplines, NAVTA developed the Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties (CVTS). The Committee provides a standardized list of criteria and assistance for groups interested in attaining Academy status.

The NAVTA Committee on Veterinary Technicians Specialties (CVTS) was formed in 1994 and is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The CVTS provides guidelines to veterinary technician organizations to facilitate the formation of a specialty organization. Academies develop advanced pathways, which a candidate must follow and complete in order to be awarded the designation of VTS (Veterinary Technician Specialist) in their specific discipline.

### **What's the difference between a Society and an Academy?**

A **Society** is for individuals interested in a specific discipline of veterinary medicine that must represent a distinct and identifiable specialty, supported by an existing veterinary specialty.

An **Academy** designates veterinary technicians receiving recognition as a specialty and is restricted to credentialed veterinary technicians, who must complete a formal process of education, training, experience and testing to qualify.

### **Societies**

These are a few examples of societies; there are more available.

**Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians**- enriches human-animal interactions by promoting scientifically based techniques of training, management, and behavior modification. SVBT provides a forum for discussion and continuing education while working with allied professional organizations to strengthen the veterinary health care profession.

**The American Association of Equine Veterinary Technicians** - a professional Association for equine veterinary technicians, assistants and practice managers, as well as other support staff. Their mission is to promote the health and welfare of the horse through the education and professional enrichment of the equine veterinary technician and assistant.

**Association of Zoo Veterinary Technicians**- dedicated to all aspects of quality veterinary technical care in the field of zoo animal medicine.

**Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Society** - provides a forum for collaboration of all individuals interested and involved with veterinary emergency and critical care medicine and surgery. Their mission is to promote the advancement of knowledge and high standards of practice in veterinary emergency medicine and critical patient care.

## **Requirements to be on an organizing committee**

The organizing committee is responsible for developing the specialty academy. This includes completing the petitioning process to CVTS and all other work necessary to begin credentialing specialists in the designated area.<sup>1</sup>

Organizing Committee members must be a credentialed technician and a member of NAVTA, and be recognized as exceptionally qualified specialists in their field with a minimum of seven years of experience of the past 10 years in the specialty, with no less than 75% of time spent being devoted to the specialty. Exceptionally qualified specialists are defined as individuals who produce scholarly work within the specialty area. Examples of scholarly work must include a combination of teaching, lecturing, peer reviewed work, research, or consulting.<sup>1</sup>

A formal petition is submitted to the CVTS for review, with the ultimate approval coming from the NAVTA Executive Board.<sup>1</sup>

## **Requirements to obtain a VTS**

Generally the requirements are: be a credentialed technician; a certain number of hours of continuing education in the specialty must be completed, 40- 75 case logs and 4-5 case reports must be completed, 2 letters of recommendation must be provided, and an application and exam fee need to be paid.. Once the requirements are completed a packet is submitted to the academy. If accepted an exam will be given.

Veterinary technicians who have met all requirements as stipulated by a recognized Academy shall be known as Veterinary Technician Specialists, VTS, with the specialty designated thereafter. Each academy has individual requirements, but all have similar requirements. For the academy you are interested in, it is recommended that you review the academy's web site.

## **Academies approved by NAVTA**

**1) The Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians** – This was the first Academy recognized. The Academy has a goal of certifying Veterinary Technicians is to assure the veterinary profession and the public that AVECCT certified technicians possess the knowledge and experience needed to work effectively in a well-equipped and staffed emergency or critical care facility.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 1996 with its first exam in 1997. As of 2015 it had 360 members.<sup>2</sup> [www.avecct.org](http://www.avecct.org)

**2) The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Anesthesia and Analgesia** – The Academy promotes patient safety, consumer protection, professionalism and excellence in anesthesia care and pain management. The Veterinary Technician Specialist in Anesthesia and Analgesia is there to provide your pet with exceptional care before, during and after a procedure.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 1999. As of 2015 it had 190 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site: [www.avta-vts.org](http://www.avta-vts.org)

**3) The Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians** – The Academy gives the technicians the opportunity to expand their knowledge and their professional value by becoming a credentialed specialist in the field of animal dentistry. <sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2002. As of 2015, it had 54 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.avdt.us](http://www.avdt.us)

**4) The Academy of Internal Medicine for Veterinary Technicians** – The Academy is made up of a group of technicians from varied backgrounds who have

come together to realize the formation of a new specialty organization specifically for veterinary technicians working in Internal Medicine. Sub-specialties include: small animal medicine, large animal medicine, cardiology, oncology and neurology.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2008. As of 2015 it had 124 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.aimvt.com](http://www.aimvt.com)

**5) The Academy of Veterinary Behavior Technicians** – The Academy promotes excellence in the discipline of veterinary behavior medicine. Veterinary Technician Specialists with behavior certification will demonstrate superior knowledge in scientifically - and humanely - based techniques of behavior health, problem prevention, training, management, and behavior modification. The AVBT will advance the skills of veterinary technicians within the discipline of animal behavior and further their recognition as critical components of the veterinary behavior team in creating, maintaining, and strengthening the human-animal bond.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2008 with its first exam in 2010. As of 2015 it had 13 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.avbt.net](http://www.avbt.net)

**6) The Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians** The Academy's mission is to advance the education and professional recognition of credentialed equine veterinary technicians who display excellence in, and dedication to, providing superior nursing care to equine patients.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2009 with its first exam in 2011. As of 2015 it had 21 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.aaevt.org/aaevtacademy.html](http://www.aaevt.org/aaevtacademy.html)

**7) The Academy of Veterinary Zoological Medicine Technicians** – The Academy was created specifically for veterinary technicians working in zoological medicine. The AVZMT offers the opportunity for zoo technicians to demonstrate excellence in the field.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2009 with its first exam in 2012. As of 2015 it had 11 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.avzmt.org](http://www.avzmt.org)

**8) The Academy of Veterinary Surgical Technicians** – The Academy encourages experienced surgical technicians to enhance their education and training by pursuing a surgical specialty. AVST will provide a standardized route through which technicians may qualify for a national examination to become a VTS (Surgery).<sup>1</sup> The Academy's first exam was given in 2013. As of 2015 it had 20 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.avst-vts.org](http://www.avst-vts.org)

**9) The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice** – The Academy modeled after the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners- this academy has developed three initial species-specific categories: canine/feline, avian/exotic and production animal. The Academy's credentialed veterinary technicians provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care. Candidates are expected to demonstrate expertise in a range of clinical disciplines within their species specialty.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2010. As of 2015 it had 31 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.avtcp.org](http://www.avtcp.org)

**10) The Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians** – The Academy was created to develop and support the area of veterinary nutrition, develop the knowledge and expertise of veterinary technicians to become certified in the field of nutrition and

endorse technicians as a vital part of the veterinary nutrition profession. <sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2010 with its first exam in 2013. As of 2015 it had 14 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site [www.nutritiontechs.org](http://www.nutritiontechs.org)

**11) The Academy of Veterinary Clinical Pathology Technicians** – The Academy was created to advance the area of and promote excellence in the discipline of veterinary clinical pathology. The academy was established in 2012 with its first exam in 2014. As of 2015 it had 7 members.<sup>2</sup> Academy web site <http://www.avcpt.net/>

**12) The Academy of Dermatology Veterinary Technicians** - The purpose of ADVT is to promote excellence through specialization in the discipline of veterinary dermatology by demonstrating an advanced proficiency of dermatologic procedures, working with the veterinary team and client to advocate superior patient care, and providing cutting-edge continuing education.<sup>1</sup> The Academy was established in 2015. As of 2016 it has not given its first exam yet. Academy web site <http://www.vetdermtech.com/>

## Summary

If you have always had a dream to become a specialist, pick what you are passionate about and go for it. There are many specialties to pick from and more to come. If you do not see one you are interested in think about starting an academy with like-minded technicians. NAVTA and the CVTS can help start the journey to develop an academy. Becoming a VTS is hard work, but worth it.

## References

1. <http://www.navta.net/?page=specialties>
2. Kenwright, K, What specialized veterinary technicians bring to the table. <http://veterinarymedicine.dvm360.com/what-specialized-veterinary-technicians-bring-table?pageID=5> Feb 09, 2015