VETERINARIANS:

PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

VETERINARIANS ARE DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF BOTH ANIMALS AND HUMANS. THEY PRACTICE IN ALL COUNTIES IN ILLINOIS AND ARE TRAINED EXPERTS WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH ISSUES INVOLVING ANIMAL WELFARE, DISEASE, FOOD SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

Completion of a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree requires four years of post-graduate specialized study. There are 31 accredited colleges of veterinary medicine in the United States.

Just like in human medicine, veterinarians may choose to specialize, and will complete additional training and testing. Often times the additional training requires a one-year internship followed by a three-year residency program. Additionally, certain specialties require veterinarians to complete a research degree (master's or PhD).

The average student debt for veterinary students at the time of graduation was $185,486 in 2023, or 1.3-to-1 times the amount of the graduating veterinarian's income.* The average starting salary for a veterinarian is $124,295 for full-time veterinarians,* with the median salary in the profession is $103,260.**

Some Illinois veterinarians have an advanced designation in one or more of the following areas:

1. Anesthesiology
2. Animal Welfare (provisional recognition)
3. Behavior
4. Clinical Pharmacology
5. Dermatology
6. Dentistry
7. Internal Medicine
8. Emergency and Critical Care
9. Laboratory Animal Medicine
10. Microbiology
11. Nutrition
12. Ophthalmology
13. Pathology
14. Preventive Medicine
15. Poultry Medicine
16. Radiology
17. Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation
18. Surgery
19. Theriogenology
20. Toxicology
21. Veterinary Practitioners
22. Zoological Medicine

*Source: AVMA
** Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Private or corporate clinical practice

Provide medical and surgical care for companion animals, exotic, equine and food animal species.

Training

Teach and train veterinarians, certified veterinary technicians, undergraduate and graduate students. Also conduct research, provide care for animals in veterinary teaching hospitals and develop continuing education programs.

Research

Working at universities, governmental agencies or industry to find innovative ways to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases that affect human and animal health. For example, veterinarians identified the cause of West Nile virus infection and made discoveries to control malaria and yellow fever. Pharmaceutical and biomedical research veterinarians develop, test and supervise the production of drugs and biological products. Veterinarians working in this sector have specialized training in toxicology, pathology, pharmacology or laboratory animal medicine.

Industry

Veterinarians work in management, technical sales, services and regulatory affairs for pet food companies, agribusinesses and pharmaceutical companies.

Regulatory Medicine

Federal and state agencies employ veterinarians to quarantine and inspect animals brought into the country. They have been involved in the prevention and eradication of diseases, including rabies and tuberculosis. Veterinarians working for the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection services (USDA-FSIS) ensure that only healthy animals enter the food supply. They ensure that meat, poultry and eggs are safe for human consumption. The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) veterinarians monitor the development and testing of new vaccines for safety and effectiveness. They also enforce animal welfare regulations to ensure humane treatment of animals, protect U.S. agriculture through disease surveillance and prevent foreign animal disease from entering our country and endangering the U.S. food supply. Veterinarians also work for other governmental agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Public Health

Veterinarians are trained as epidemiologists in city, county, state and federal agencies investigating human and animal disease outbreaks, such as food-borne illness, influenza and rabies. More than 100 veterinarians work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They protect public health by investigating disease throughout the world and developing programs to help prevent the spread of diseases such as Ebola, malaria and Avian Influenza. Veterinarians in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) protect human and animal health and safety by developing disease surveillance of anti-terrorism procedures and protocols. Veterinarians play vital roles in helping communities recover from human-caused and natural disasters.

Military Service

Veterinarians serving the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps protect the U.S. against bioterrorism. They are responsible for food safety, veterinary care of government-owned animals and biomedical research and development. In the U.S. Air Force, veterinarians serve in the Biomedical Science Corps as public health officers. They manage occupational illness, food-borne disease and communicable disease control programs at Air Force bases throughout the world. Military veterinarians also help to rebuild and improve animal care systems in underdeveloped and war-damaged countries.

Other Services

Veterinarians also work in the areas of animal welfare, shelter medicine, zoo medicine, aquatic animal medicine, aerospace medicine, sports medicine, animal-assisted therapy programs and wildlife medicine.

Veterinarians engage in local, state and federal governments, collaborating with legislators to shape laws that protect the health, welfare and well-being of animals and people.

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