

I want to be a veterinary nurse!



Animal Antics talks to Samantha Calder, a Veterinary Nurse at Coventry PetAid hospital, to find out what it's like!

What does a veterinary nurse do?

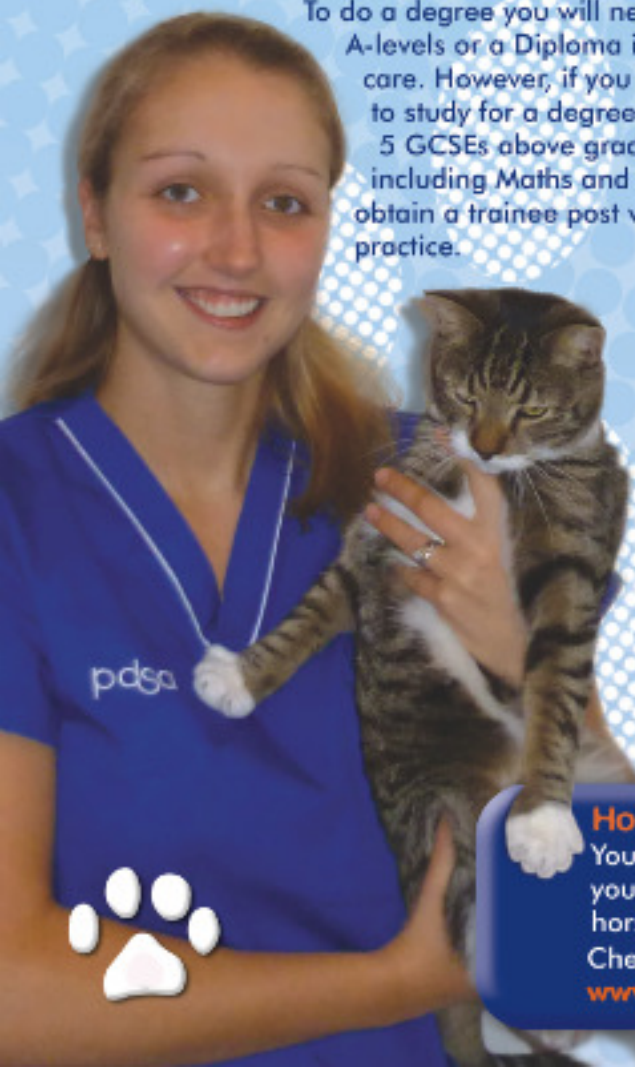
We assist vets with their consultations and operations and provide nursing care for sick animals. We also help ensure the PetAid hospitals are kept clean and hygienic. We care for the animals from when they are admitted until they recover and are reunited with their owners, providing food, water, exercise and TLC. Nurses also educate owners about pet care as well as running weight clinics and dental checks.

Do I need to go to university?

What qualifications do I need?

You don't have to go to university, but I decided this was the route I wanted to take and studied for my degree in veterinary nursing, while living at home.

To do a degree you will need A-levels or a Diploma in animal care. However, if you don't want to study for a degree, you need 5 GCSEs above grade C, including Maths and English, to obtain a trainee post within a practice.



What type of hours would I work?

A vet nurse works a variety of hours – this is definitely not a 9 to 5 job. Animals don't choose when to be sick and this can mean staying late. Working weekends and at night can be a normal part of a veterinary nurse's career.

What does a typical day involve?

No two days are the same. However, the day usually starts with admitting all the patients and then setting up the operating theatre. The nurse prepares each pet for surgery by clipping the fur and cleaning them. After the operation, the nurse will assist with the patient's recovery and carry out aftercare such as cleaning, feeding and exercising. At the end of the day the nurse cleans all the areas and equipment and prepares for the next day.

What personal skills does a nurse need?

You need to be caring and have good communication skills to talk to pet owners and other staff members. You need to be able to work as part of a team and on your own and have good listening skills to ensure the best care for the pet patients.

What is your favourite part of your job?

My favourite part is surgery and monitoring anaesthesia. The variety of each day keeps the job interesting and you always learn new skills. The most rewarding part of my job is when you have nursed a patient for several days and they finally pull through. It is the best feeling to know you have made a difference to an animal's life.

What is your least favourite part of your job?

The most difficult part of my job is when an animal can't be helped further and putting them to sleep is the kindest option. You have to be brave, and understand that it's the kindest thing to do. It can be hard to deal with, but saving other animals makes the job worthwhile.

How can I become a veterinary nurse?

You should get lots of experience to make sure it is the right career for you. Get involved with local catteries/ boarding kennels or at farms and horse stables. Even caring for your own pets is good experience. Check out the British Veterinary Nursing Association's website: www.bvna.org.uk for more information!

