

PDSA is the UK's leading veterinary charity, caring for the pets of people in need. We provide free PDSA veterinary treatment to more than 4,650 sick and injured animals every working day.

The charity is a large multi-site organisation with a head office in Telford, Shropshire, and 47 PetAid hospitals around the UK. The vast majority of PDSA vets and nurses are employed in these PetAid hospitals.

Senior Veterinary Surgeon

The Senior Veterinary Surgeon is the team leader within a PetAid hospital and is responsible for managing the flow of cases, ensuring that a good standard of treatment is achieved in a consistent manner.

Veterinary Surgeon

Supported by a dedicated team of nursing staff, Veterinary Surgeons within PDSA are responsible for the diagnosis and treatment of sick and injured animals belonging to owners eligible to receive free PetAid services from PDSA.

Head Nurse

PDSA Head Nurses report directly to the Senior Veterinary Surgeon and manage the Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Care Assistant and Nursing Auxiliary teams. They are qualified and experienced Veterinary Nurses that organise and ensure the smooth running of the medical and surgical units within the PetAid hospital whilst continuing to carry out their Veterinary Nursing duties.

Veterinary Nurse

PDSA Veterinary Nurses provide assistance to Veterinary Surgeons in the examination and treatment of sick and injured animals.

Veterinary Care Assistants

Veterinary Care Assistants play an important role in providing support to the Veterinary Nursing teams in basic kennel management and theatre duties, this in turn ensures that the Veterinary Nursing teams may support the Veterinary Surgeons further by carrying out more involved medical and surgical work.

Animal Care Auxiliary

Animal Care Auxiliaries undertake cleaning duties and provide basic care for animal inpatients. Although no formal qualifications are required as an Animal Care Auxiliary, a genuine interest in and concern for the welfare of animals is essential, coupled with either previous practical experience, or a willingness to learn about general animal care.

Nursing Auxiliary

Nursing Auxiliaries undertake general cleaning duties within PDSA PetAid hospitals thereby maintaining general tidiness, hygiene and cleanliness. They also provide basic assistance to veterinary staff in the treatment of animals, as well as feeding inpatients and cleaning kennels.

You can find out more information about careers with PDSA, by visiting the [YoungPDSA site](#).

How do I become a veterinary surgeon?

Vets are responsible for the prevention of disease and for the medical and surgical treatment of animals including household pets, zoo animals, farm animals and horses. Many vets choose to study further qualifications through the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and specialise in one area.

To become a vet you need to go to university and take a veterinary degree. These universities are Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and London (the Royal Veterinary College). The courses are five years in length (six at Cambridge). A new veterinary school recently opened at Nottingham University.

So what do I have to study?

A levels

You have to have Chemistry A level. The requirement for other subjects varies a little from university to university, but either one or two subjects from Biology, Physics or Maths should be offered. Some universities may accept a third A level in a non-science subject, but it is best to check with them. The minimum grades generally expected are two As and a B, though some universities will require three grade As.

AS Levels

Some universities accept AS levels, but requirements can vary. Sometimes 2 AS levels will be accepted in lieu of one A level.

SCE Highers

Chemistry must be offered and generally two subjects from Biology, Physics or Maths. The grades expected are AAABB.

Advanced Highers

Applicants are normally advised to proceed to the Sixth Year and include CSYS Chemistry and Biology or Physics in their subjects.

GCSE

You must meet the general entrance requirements of the university. Most universities require you to have at least a grade C pass in English language, Maths and Science, and many will expect A grades at GCSE. Where A level Biology or Physics is not offered, you must have a good pass in that subject at GCSE level.

Work Experience

All of the university veterinary schools require applicants to show evidence of their interest and commitment to working in a veterinary practice and working with and handling animals including livestock.

How do I become a veterinary nurse?

Veterinary nurses care for animals receiving treatment within a veterinary practice. A nurse works as part of the veterinary team, providing expert supportive care for sick animals under the direction of a vet. They are also skilled at undertaking a range of diagnostic tests, medical treatments and minor surgical procedures under veterinary direction. They also play a significant role in the education of owners about maintaining the health of their pets.

What qualifications do I need?

GCSE

You will need 5 GCSEs at grade C or higher or five Scottish standard grades 1 to 3. These must include English Language and two science subjects, one of which may be Maths.

Training

You can train either as a small animal veterinary nurse or as an equine (horse) veterinary nurse. Training can take place in an RCVS approved training practice. Student nurses undertake clinically based training, which involves at least two years working in the practice, attending college on a day-release or block release basis.

Assessments

Student nurses are continually assessed at work and will be required to take RCVS independent examinations at the end of their first and second years.

Qualifications

Success in these assessments and examinations will lead to National Vocational Qualifications at levels 2 and 3.

For more information on both these roles, please contact:

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Royal Belgravia House
62-64 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF

Telephone: 020 7222 2001