

Guide to Becoming a Veterinarian

Two departments in the University of Wyoming, Animal Science and Veterinary Sciences, have combined their efforts to offer a Pre-Veterinary Medicine Option in Animal and Veterinary Sciences. The purpose of the option is to prepare students to apply successfully to colleges of veterinary medicine. It generally takes three years of coursework for students to meet the minimum requirements to veterinary school. If you are accepted to a college of veterinary medicine, it will take an additional four years of formal education to become a veterinarian with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree. The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) has current information on career choices within the profession. An excellent web site called [NetVet](#) provides a large amount of information on veterinary medicine in the United States.

Following graduation as a DVM, most veterinarians go into general practice. But some get additional training via internships (1-year program in small or large animal medicine), a residency program (2 – 3-year training in multiple disciplines), board certification (20 specialties including anesthesiology, animal behavior, emergency/critical care, internal medicine, microbiology, ophthalmology, pathology, preventive medicine, surgery, reproduction and zoological medicine) or a PhD. There are good career opportunities in private industry, government and state service, and with the military.

Approximately 75% of all veterinarians are in private clinical practice. Of those, about 58% are engaged in exclusively small animal practice in which they treat only companion animals. Approximately 18% limit their practice to the care of farm animals or horses. Another 19% are involved in mixed (or general) animal practice. Their patients include all types of pets, horses, and livestock.

Veterinarians in private clinical practice are responsible for the health of approximately 53 million dogs and 59 million cats. Bird ownership has risen over the past 5 years from 11 million in 1991 to approximately 13 million birds. The number of pleasure horses in the U.S. is about 4 million.

Wyoming now (2008) has a trial 2-year veterinary debt repayment program paid for by the Wyoming taxpayer. Its intention is to encourage more food animal veterinarians to come to the state, and to retain those already here. [Click here for details.](#)

WYOMING RESIDENTS

Wyoming does not have a college of veterinary medicine. Wyoming residents can however apply to a veterinary program through the [WICHE](#) ("which-ee": Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) Professional Student Exchange Program. Participating WICHE/PSEP schools are [Colorado State University](#), [Oregon State University](#) and [Washington State University](#). Most of our students go to CSU, which has an excellent national reputation and is strong in small and exotic animal medicine, oncology, and basic research. OSU and WSU also

have strong reputations in various areas. Students who meet Wyoming's residency requirements AND are accepted at a participating school pay resident tuition (in-state rates) at that school. The taxpayers of Wyoming pick up the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition. There is no obligation to pay the state pay (unlike many states), since the state is committed to giving opportunities to its citizens to pursue their professional dreams. About 5 new students per year are supported at the current time. Wyoming residents can also apply to other veterinary colleges in the U.S. No state support is offered if you pursue that option. You can see the veterinary colleges that exist elsewhere in the USA by clicking [here](#).

NON-WYOMING RESIDENTS

We will accept students who are not Wyoming residents and advise them in coursework that will enable them to apply to colleges of veterinary medicine in their home state or in states that accept students from their state of residency. Every effort is made to ensure that students have the very best chance of acceptance into a professional program. Requirements for the various colleges can be located at the web site of the [Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges](#) by clicking [here](#).

MAJORS

Students can complete their pre-veterinary medicine requirements in several majors. The most compatible majors are animal and veterinary sciences (pre-vet option), molecular biology (pre-professional option) and zoology. The recent merger of B.S. degree tracks by the Departments of Animal and Veterinary Sciences has consolidated their pre-veterinary medicine offerings and made changing options within the degree program very convenient. **Requirements for entrance to veterinary schools vary and change from year to year. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the courses taken at the University of Wyoming meet the requirements for entrance into the veterinary school of their choice. The curriculum will be adjusted as needed to satisfy the requirements of the WICHE veterinary schools.** Requirements for the various colleges can be located at the web site of the [Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges](#) by clicking [here](#).

APPLICATION TO VETERINARY COLLEGES

At least three years of pre-veterinary medicine coursework are required for application. Students may apply in their junior year of college if they can complete the required coursework in that year. In 1998, there were approximately three applicants per position in the nation's 27 veterinary schools. If accepted in their junior year, students may transfer course credits back to UW to receive their B.S. degree. Application deadlines vary, but most are around October 1. Most veterinary colleges in the US have agreed on a standard format for applicants, and this is done through the pay-for-service [Veterinary Medical College Application Service](#) (VMCAS).

PRE-VET COURSEWORK

Coursework required for application to a college of veterinary medicine varies with the school, but every effort is made to ensure that students meet all requirements for their schools of

choice. A strong mathematics, biological sciences, and physical sciences background is necessary. The pre-veterinary medicine option in animal and veterinary sciences will meet the application requirements for most colleges of veterinary medicine. Coursework can be tailored to meet individual student needs. There is a [check sheet](#) you can use to make sure you meet the core requirements.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Individual schools select students on different criteria, but students need to maintain a high GPA on coursework, score well on national examinations (the Graduate Record Exam is required for application by most colleges), and have solid animal and veterinary experience. About one in three students are accepted in a given year. GPAs vary by school (about 3.6 or better on a 4.0 scale is required for Wyoming residents to have a good shot at getting into a veterinary college).

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Does UW have a vet school? No. However, students from anywhere can take their pre-veterinary coursework at UW and be competitive.
2. Would it enhance my chances of getting accepted if I went to a college that does have a vet school? No. UW has an excellent reputation with such colleges and all coursework for application can be completed here.
3. What does it cost to go to vet school? It varies from about \$6000 to \$30,000 per year depending on the school and your residency status. Wyoming residents accepted through WICHE pay about \$8000 per year and the state pays the balance.
4. What kind of grades are required for acceptance into vet school? It varies by school and ranges from about 3.4 to 3.8. However, GRE test scores and animal and/or veterinary experience are just as important. Also, involvement in club activities and other college activities is important. Introverts with high grades often are not accepted.
5. What can I do if I don't get in? It often takes several applications before acceptance. If early grades indicate that you may have difficulty getting accepted, you could improve your study habits or change majors. Dedication is required. Students with a B.S. degree can also find jobs in the animal health industry, sales, or production, etc. Many students go on to graduate school.
6. Does Wyoming have a program to help offset the college debts of veterinarians? Yes, the 2008 legislature has funded a [2-year program](#) designed for food animal veterinarians in underserved areas of the state. [Details](#) are available from the Wyoming Livestock Board.