



National Association of Veterinary Technician in America Policy on Assistant Training

Introduction

Veterinary technicians work more efficiently when they have individuals who can assist them in the completion of their responsibilities. Therefore, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) recognizes the vital role of assistants on the veterinary health care team and further understands that assistants may be more effective and efficient if they are provided formal training in certain tasks. Veterinary Assistant Training programs must emphasize the role of all members of the team and are responsible for educating both students and their potential employers on proper delegation to assistants. Any tasks delegated to assistants must be under the direct supervision of the veterinarian or credentialed veterinary technician.

Role of the Members of the Veterinary Health Care Team

NAVTA supports the following terminology pertaining to the titles of the members of the veterinary health care team.

“Credentialed” is the title of a person who is licensed, registered, or certified through a specific process as designated by each state.

“Veterinary Technician Specialists” (VTS). These individuals possess advanced certification from a specialty Organization recognized by NAVTA.

“Veterinary Technology” is the science and art of providing professional support service to veterinarians in the practice of their profession.

“Veterinary Technician” is a person who has graduated from a two- or three-year, AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology, who holds an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree from such study or who is credentialed (not all credentialed technicians have completed a veterinary technology school program).

“Veterinary Technologist” is a graduate of a four-year, AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology who holds a baccalaureate degree from such study.

“Laboratory Animal Technician” is a person whose academic training, knowledge and skills have been limited to laboratory animals.

“Veterinary Technician Assistant,” is a person who has graduated from a NAVTA approved Veterinary Assistant program and has passed the NAVTA approved credentialing exam.

The adjectives, “animal,” “veterinary,” “ward,” or “hospital” combined with the nouns “attendant,” “caretaker,” or “assistant” are titles sometimes used for individuals where training, knowledge, and skills are less than that required for identification as a veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, or laboratory animal technician.

Essentials Requirements for Assistant Programs

1. Courses to accomplish the training of assistants may be offered through high schools, informal short courses, and certificate programs at community colleges or distance-learning programs.
2. Minimum requirements include an affiliation with an AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology. This affiliation should be one which facilitates the acquiring of additional education from the assistant level to veterinary technician for those individuals that choose to continue on with a career in veterinary technology.
3. A working relationship should be developed with the national, state and local veterinary technician association and individuals from these associations should be appointed to the program’s Advisory Committee.
4. The assistant program courses must be taught by credentialed veterinary technicians and/or licensed veterinarians.
5. The program should encompass a minimum of 150 contact hours, including a significant number of hours devoted to hands-on training with live animals in the work place or classroom laboratory.
6. The curriculum should be task oriented and additional basic tasks may be added to the skills list but must not encroach on essential areas of study for veterinary technicians.
7. A mechanism must be in place to evaluate the student’s progress both on the didactic material and with hands-on skills.

Tasks Appropriate to Delegate to the Assistant

When identifying those tasks which are appropriate for an assistant to complete, the determining factor in assigning tasks to the assistant is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome. In developing the following list of tasks which the assistant may be trained to perform, each task was evaluated for appropriateness based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

1. What is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome?

2. Could/would the average client perform the task?
3. Does it change the physiologic state of the patient?
4. Does the information obtained, impact the veterinarian's diagnosis?

It is essential to remember that the completion of all assistant tasks requires direct supervision either by the veterinarian or the credentialed veterinary technician. The following delineation of tasks, appropriate for delegation to the assistant on the veterinary health care team, was developed through a cooperative effort between NAVTA, the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators (AVTE), and the AVMA's Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (CVTEA). Educating assistants on tasks beyond the scope of this list is discouraged.

Essential Skills for Assistant Training

I. Office and Hospital Procedures

A. Front Desk

- 1) Greet Clients
- 2) Demonstrate proper appointment scheduling and make appointments
- 3) Prepare appropriate certificates for signature
- 4) Admit patients - Knowledge of or assist with patient admissions
- 5) Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records
- 6) Perform basic veterinary medical record keeping procedures
- 7) Demonstrate elementary computer skills
- 8) Utilize basic medical terminology
- 9) Perform basic invoicing, billing, and payment on account procedures

B. Telephone

- 1) Answer and direct phone calls
- 2) Recognize and respond appropriately to veterinary medical emergencies by notifying the appropriate hospital personnel
- 3) Request records and information from other veterinary facilities

C. Maintain basic cleanliness and orderliness of a veterinary facility

- 1) Inventory supplies
- 2) Restock shelves
- 3) Maintain x-ray, surgery, and laboratory logs
- 4) Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records, radiographs, laboratory reports etc.
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of basic cleaning techniques of animal kennels and bedding, examination rooms, hospital facilities, and surgical suites

II. Communication and Client Relations

A. Develop effective client communication skills

B. Write business letters

C. Understand ethical conduct in relationship to the day to day operations of a veterinary facility

D. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the veterinary health team and the important part that each plays in the delivery of excellent care

E. Professional conduct

- 1) Understand the human-animal bond
- 2) Appropriate appearance
- 3) Professional language

4) Conduct in a workplace (cells phones, texting, social networking, etc.)

III. Pharmacy and Pharmacology

A. Legal Issues

- 1) Recognize legal issues involving drugs in the workplace
- 2) Recognize general types and groups of drugs and demonstrate proper terminology
- 3) Differentiate prescription drugs from over-the-counter drugs and describe proper prescription label requirements

B. Filling medications and inventory control

- 1) Label and package dispensed drugs correctly
- 2) Store, safely handle and dispose of biological and therapeutic agents, pesticides, and hazardous waste
- 3) Perform inventory control procedures including restocking supplies and checking expiration dates

C. Vaccinations

- 1) Reconstitute vaccines and be familiar with proper protocols
- 2) Describe possible routes and methods of drug and vaccine administration that the veterinarian or veterinary technician may choose

IV. Examination Room Procedures

A. Restrain Patients

1) Small Animals

- a. Place and remove small animals from cages
- b. Place and restrain small animals on tables and floor
- c. Apply dog and cat safety muzzle
- d. Apply Elizabethan collar
- e. Apply restraint pole
- f. Demonstrate standing restraint, sitting and lateral restraint on dogs and cats.

2) Proper Restraint for Birds, Rabbits, Pocket Pets and Exotics

3) Large Animals

- a. Halter, tie, and lead horses and cattle
- b. Restrain cattle & horses
- c. Apply twitch
- d. Apply nose tongs/leads
- e. Restrain sheep & swine
- f. Load large animals.

B. Basic Procedures

- 1) Determine and record temperature, pulse, respiration, and weight of patients
- 2) Trim nails (dogs, cats, and birds)
- 3) Express anal sacs using the external method
- 4) Identify external parasites: mites, lice, fleas, ticks
- 5) Recognize AKC dog breeds and CFA cat breeds
- 6) Proper identification of species gender (esp. felines)
- 7) Bathe and groom animals -(understand basic ear cleaning, type of nail clippers, medicated shampoos etc.)
- 8) Be familiar with small animal nutritional requirements and basic differences between 'premium' vs. non-premium foods

V. Surgical Preparation and Assisting

A. Assist in performing surgical preparations

- 1) Prepare surgical equipment/supplies
- 2) Sterilize instruments & supplies using appropriate methods
- 3) Identify common instruments

- 4) Identify common suture materials, types, and sizes
 - 5) Assist the veterinarian and/or veterinary technician with preparation of patients using aseptic technique
 - 6) Operate and maintain autoclaves
 - 7) Describe operating room sanitation & care
 - 8) Assist with positioning of surgical patients
 - 9) Aid the veterinarian and/or veterinary technician with physical monitoring of recovering surgical patients
 - 10) Maintain surgical log
- B. Facility and equipment cleanliness
- 1) Maintain proper operating room conduct and asepsis
 - 2) Perform post-surgical clean up
 - 3) Fold surgical gowns and drapes
- C. Have knowledge of:
- 1) Surgical equipment
 - 2) Surgical room and prep area
 - 3) Instruments
 - 4) Proper disposal of medical waste, including hazardous waste.

VI. Small Animal Nursing (Large Animal Nursing - optional)

A. Safety Concerns

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge of basic normal and abnormal animal behavior
- 2) Utilize patient & personnel safety measures
- 3) Identify potential zoonotic diseases
- 4) Describe Isolation procedures
- 5) Describe hazardous waste disposal
- 6) Describe basic sanitation
- 7) Be familiar with OSHA standards

B. Animal Care

- 1) Provide routine record-keeping and observation of hospitalized patients, i.e. stress importance of notations made when cleaning and feeding
- 2) Demonstrate a basic understanding of common diseases and medical conditions
- 3) Monitor/restrain patients for fluid therapy
- 4) Hand pilling (dog, cat)
- 5) Demonstrate understanding of treatment plan
- 6) Apply and remove bandages to healthy animals (equine leg and tail wraps - optional)
- 7) Perform therapeutic bathing, basic grooming, and dipping of small animals
- 8) Clean external ear canals
- 9) Prepare food & prescription diets - be aware of any special dietary needs
- 10) Clean & disinfect cages and kennels (stalls - optional)
- 11) Provide care & maintenance of nursing equipment
- 12) Demonstrate understanding of euthanasia process

VII. Laboratory Procedures

A. Technical assistance in the laboratory

- 1) Collect voided urine samples
- 2) Determine physical properties of urine including color and clarity
- 3) Assist in the collection of blood samples for procedures
- 4) Collect voided fecal samples for examination
- 5) Prepare fecal flotation solutions and set up fecal flotations
- 6) Assist in necropsy procedures
- 7) Explain how to handle rabies suspects & samples safely
- 8) Handle disposal of dead animals

- B. Laboratory record keeping
 - 1) Ensure all laboratory results are accurately recorded
 - 2) Stock laboratory supplies
 - 3) File laboratory reports

VIII. Radiology & Ultrasound Imaging

- A. Follow recommended safety measures
- B. Assist the veterinarian and/or the veterinary technician in the completion of diagnostic radiographs and ultrasound including the restraint and positioning of patients
- C. Process diagnostic radiographs
- D. Use hand and automatic processing in darkroom
- E. Maintain quality control
- F. Label, file and store film and radiographs
- G. Properly care for equipment
- H. Clean screens
- I. Know safety techniques for handling chemicals

NAVTA's Evaluation Protocol for Assistant Training Programs

In order for assistant training programs to meet the curricular guidelines of the NAVTA Education Committee the following standards must be met:

There should be a licensed veterinarian or credentialed veterinary technician teaching the courses - affiliation with an AVMA-accredited veterinary technician education program is mandated.

Course content should follow the established NAVTA Guidelines for Assistant Programs. Tasks covered must be appropriate for the assistant to perform.

The presence of five or more tasks in the curriculum which are not covered by the NAVTA guidelines constitutes grounds for not meeting the curricular guidelines.

If the program does not meet the curricular guidelines, the program may respond in writing as to why they feel it is necessary to cover tasks not included in the NAVTA guidelines for Assistant Programs.

There should be a clearly defined mechanism in place for evaluating student's progress. This should be in the form of both written and practical competencies. Lack of a mechanism for evaluating student's progress will result in the program not meeting the curricular guidelines of the NAVTA Education Committee.

The NAVTA Education Committee will review the curriculum for training assistants. The Committee will consist of the Chair who is also the NAVTA Recording Secretary and the Committee's representative to the Executive Board, plus five other members. Two will be NAVTA members and three will be AVTE/NAVTA members. Committee members will serve a two- year term. Committee members shall not be involved in assistant training.

The initial review fee will be \$250. The biennial renewal fee will be \$100.

The Education Committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Board to either provide the program with the acknowledgment that the program has met the curricular guidelines set forth by the NAVTA Education Committee, or inform the program of the deficiencies that kept such a designation from being given.

The acknowledgment that the assistant program has met the curricular guidelines set forth by the NAVTA Education Committee will be good for two years. At that time, a request for review of the curriculum should be submitted along with a description of any changes made in the program since the last review.

All materials should be submitted directly to
NAVTA
50 S. Pickett St., Suite 110
Alexandria, VA 22304.

Programs are welcome to submit curricula anytime during the year; however, reviews will take place twice a year. Curricula should be submitted by February to be reviewed in April. Curricula should be submitted by September to be reviewed in November.

Assistant Program Review Summary Sheet - For Program Use

Name of Curriculum: _____

Address/Phone Numbers / E-mail: _____

Contact Person and relationship to the program:

The following shall be submitted to the NAVTA Education Committee in order to have the curriculum reviewed as to whether it meets the curricular guidelines of the Committee.

1. Program brochure or information sheet.
2. Program overview showing each unit/module which indicates the length of time it takes to complete the unit.
3. An outline from each unit/module which clearly indicates the amount of time spent in lecture and laboratory for the unit.
4. A brief summary on the mechanisms utilized to evaluate competency.
5. A listing of instructors for the program including their title and highest degree earned.
6. Provide resumes for all instructors.
7. An example of a lecture/laboratory session for each unit.
8. Indicate which, if any, AVMA-accredited veterinary technology education program the assistant program is affiliated with.
9. Indicate what, if any, certificate of completion/degree is awarded to those who complete the program.
10. Provide an estimate of the number of students currently enrolled in the program.
11. Provide numbers to indicate how many have completed the program.
12. Provide a list of text books used by the students.
13. Provide all skills checklists.
14. Provide the total number of animals and specific species used in the program.
15. Provide 2-3 examinations that are given to the students.