



## What's in a title?

Veterinary medicine includes many roles and levels of training, and the titles you may hear can sometimes be confusing. The guide below explains common veterinary titles to help you understand who may be involved in your pet's care and why each role matters.

### ■ What is a veterinarian?

A veterinarian, often referred to as a DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine), is a licensed medical professional trained to diagnose, treat, and manage medical conditions in animals. Veterinarians may oversee all aspects of a pet's care, including exams, diagnostics, treatment plans, and coordination with specialists when needed.

### ■ What is a specialist?

A specialist is a veterinarian who has completed veterinary school, a rotating internship, and a residency in a specific area of medicine. All specialties require extensive examinations, and most also require publications accepted by peer-reviewed journals. Terms that denote a specialist include Board-Certified,\* Specialist, Diplomate, and specialty titles such as Criticalist, Surgeon, Cardiologist, Neurologist, Oncologist, and others.

### ■ What is an internship / intern?

An internship is a one-year position that veterinarians apply for after graduating from veterinary school. These programs expose interns to multiple specialties and specialists, helping them build broad clinical experience.

### ■ What is a residency / resident?

After completing an internship, veterinarians may choose to enter general practice or pursue advanced specialty training through a residency. Residencies typically range from two to five years, depending on the specialty and program.

### ■ What does "practice limited to..." mean?

Veterinarians who have completed a residency but have not yet met all requirements for board certification must use the designation "practice limited to..." in their professional title. These doctors may also be referred to as residency-trained or board-eligible.

### ■ What is a fellow?

A fellow is a veterinarian who has completed a residency and chooses to pursue additional, optional training in a sub-specialty. A fellowship is not required to practice medicine but may be necessary for advanced sub-specialty training.

### ■ What is a veterinary technician?

A veterinary technician is a trained professional who has passed state and national board examinations and is licensed by the state. Veterinary technicians play a critical role in patient care, including monitoring and treating critically ill or injured patients, assisting with procedures and surgeries, and supporting veterinarians across all areas of care.

### ■ What do these abbreviations mean?

BVSc – Bachelor of Veterinary Science  
BVMS – Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery  
DVM – Doctor of Veterinary Medicine  
VTS – Veterinary Technician Specialist  
RVT – Registered Veterinary Technician

*You may see Board-Certified doctors having additional credentials such as:*

DACVECC – Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care

DACVIM – Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine

DACVS – Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons

*If you have questions about any of the roles or titles described above, please don't hesitate to ask. We're always happy to explain, talk things through, and make sure you feel supported every step of the way – for both you and your pet.*

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*\*Not all of our doctors are board-certified*

