CU Continuing Education
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

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Veterinary Medicine: Quick Facts

Is this career right for you?	• Do you love working with animals, even those who are in distress from illness or injury? • Do you also love working with people (your clients and colleagues)? • Would you enjoy applying learning and applying science concepts, such as anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry, to understand disease processes and medical treatments for animals? All veterinary students are trained in the diagnosis and treatment of injuries and diseases in cats, dogs, horses, and cattle. Many veterinarians ultimately work in private or group practices and focus on treatment of companion animals or livestock. However, veterinarians can work in a variety of other environments, such as in lab animal medicine, wildlife or zoo animal medicine, research, teaching, public health, and policy.
Degree	DVM or VMD Each veterinary school offers only one or the other; the two degrees are considered to be identical. (There are historical reasons for the two names, but there is no functional difference.)
Dual Degree Programs	Dual degree programs take one to four years longer to complete than completing a DVM or VMD degree alone, but typically take less time than completing each degree separately. (Note: Some of the schools that do not offer dual degree programs do offer more than one type of degree, but students would have to complete each separately.) A sampling of dental dual degree programs includes: • DVM/PhD or VMD/PhD: for people who want to have a very strong research component to their work in addition to becoming a clinical veterinarian. • DVM/MPH or VMD/MPH: for people who want training in Public Health in addition to becoming a veterinarian. These people often become involved in population-level veterinary initiatives, with the goal of improving animal health throughout an entire region. • DVM/MBA or VMD/MBA: for people who want formal business training in addition to training to become a veterinarian. This business knowledge can help individuals effectively run private practices, but also prepares people to take on healthcare management roles in their careers.
Length of Professional Training	Veterinary school takes four years. After completing veterinary school, you may choose to go straight into practice. Some veterinarians choose to undertake a one-year veterinary internship followed by a three-year veterinary residency to gain advanced training as a general practice veterinarian or to become a specialist.

Pre-Veterinary Clinical Experience	On average, successful veterinary school applications have engaged in 1,000 to 2,000 hours of clinical experience (working or volunteering in a clinical setting under the supervision of a veterinarian) by the time they submit their VMCAS application.
Non-Clinical Animal Handling Experience	Successful applicants have spent, on average, 1,000 to 2,000 hours engaged in formal (paid or volunteer) non-clinical animal handling experience by the time they apply. Examples include volunteering at an animal shelter, participation in 4-H, employment at a doggie day care facility or a pet grooming business, or volunteering at a therapeutic horseback riding center or horse rescue organization. It is important for veterinary school candidates to be comfortable around all types of animals. If you do not have a background working with large animals, such as horses or cattle, you should seek out volunteer experiences that will allow you to gain this type of experience. Formal animal handling experiences with other types of animals, such as exotic pets, wildlife, or laboratory animals, are also valued.
Other Desired Traits and Experiences	Refer to the **List of Core Competencies for Pre-Health Students**, taking note that DVM programs especially emphasize the following: • **Communication Skills:** It is essential for veterinarians to have effective communication skills so they can empathize with and educate their clients. Experiences that allow you to hone and develop your interpersonal communication skills are thus highly valued. • **Cultural Sensitivity:** Most veterinarians serve clients from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, experiences with people of diverse backgrounds is valued. Such experiences may include involvement with multicultural organizations or other volunteer or paid positions that have allowed you to get to know people whose backgrounds and belief systems are quite different from your own. • **Scientific Inquiry:** Your future work as a veterinarian will require you to use strong critical thinking skills on the job and to remain committed to lifelong learning. Getting involved in an independent study project or other research is a great way to demonstrate that you not only enjoy learning new things but also that you find it satisfying to apply what you learn. Furthermore, advancement of veterinary medical knowledge benefits large populations of patients; applicants with skills in research have the potential to provide such benefits. Although involvement in research is not an absolute requirement, it is considered a desirable experience for the admission evaluation. Research is defined as involvement in a scholarly or scientific hypothesis investigation that is supervised by an individual with verifiable research credentials. • **Community Service:** Veterinarians typically have strong altruistic motivations. Most successful applicants have a history of performing acts of service to people and animals in need. Greater consideration is given to long-term efforts that exemplify the applicant's dedication and depth of commitment to the service chosen. • **Effective Teamwork and Leadership:** Veterinarians serve as leaders within their clinics and must tactfully influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their clients. For this reason, DVM programs value a history of serving as a leader of a team of people in an organized environment (such as serving as a teaching assistant, a resident assistant in a dormitory, a wilderness guide, a manager at work, the captain of an athletic team, or an officer in the military). Likewise, veterinarians often work in group practices, in close collaboration with others; thus, DVM programs look for a past history of collaborating successfully with others on a team in a professional setting (such as in research, business, etc.).

GPA	• Mean *cumulative* GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.6 • Mean *science** GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.5 Although it is ideal to apply with mean cumulative and science GPAs at or above the nationwide means for accepted students, you can become a strong candidate with lower GPAs *if your recent academic history demonstrates a long-term trend of academic success.* If your cumulative and/or science GPAs are currently below the means for accepted students, you can still become a competitive applicant if *each* of your term GPAs *for the four consecutive terms leading up to the time of application* are at or above 3.5. If you have already completed the prerequisites, consider taking completing additional semesters with upper-division science elective courses or completing a one-year pre-health master's program before applying to veterinary medical college. **Science GPA is defined as your average GPA in all biology, chemistry, and physics courses. (CU Boulder prefixes of EBIO, IPHY, MCDB, NRSC, CHEM, and PHYS.) Writing and Statistics courses taken in these departments do not count toward your science GPA.*
Admissions Test	Some, but not all, DVM programs require applicants to take the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) General Test. If you plan to take the GRE, you should do so no later than mid-August of your application year in order to meet the deadline for official score reports. Aim to earn a GRE score that is near the mean for admitted students for your schools of interest. Mean GRE scores for accepted applicants to veterinary medical colleges nationwide: • Verbal Reasoning: 66th percentile • Quantitative Reasoning: 57th percentile • Writing: 60th percentile On average, successful GRE test-takers devote a total of about 150 hours to GRE prep.
Common Application Service	VMCAS (Veterinary Medical College Application Service)
Reference Guides for School Selection	To look up admissions information for DVM programs, use the AAVMC's *Veterinary Medical School Admissions Requirements (VMSAR)* resource, found online. After logging in, you will see the Directory. Click on the other tabs next to the Directory to view the following resources: • General Information Table • Summary of Course Prerequisites • Cost Comparison Tool
Number of schools to which to apply	We recommend applying to 3 to 6 well-chosen veterinary medical schools. Most veterinary schools are public schools, where your state of residency will play a very strong role in your chances of acceptance. At public schools, all out-of-state residents must compete for the small number of seats that are allocated for out-of-staters. (If you are from a state without a veterinary school of its own, there will be at least one public veterinary school that offers the equivalent of in-state status to residents of your state.) The private veterinary schools do not use your state of residency as a factor in admissions, so we recommend applying to at least a couple of private schools (list follows): • Cornell University (NY) • University of Pennsylvania • Lincoln Memorial University (TN) • Tufts University (MA) • Tuskegee University (AL) • Western University (CA) • Midwestern University (AZ)

Timing of Application	You will need to submit a common (VMCAS) application as well as supplemental applications to each school. The VMCAS application opens in mid-May each year and closes in mid-September. Although veterinary medical schools do not conduct rolling admissions, it is to your advantage to submit your common application *at least one month before the official deadline* (which is around mid-September each year, for the following year's entering class) so that you have time to remedy any potential errors or omissions before the deadline. *Strongly recommended veterinary school application timeline:*

Science coursework	Complete the prerequisites plus at least two upper-division biomedical science courses, with strong grades
Clinical experience	Spend at least 500 hours working as a veterinary assistant. (1,000+ hours is more competitive)
Register for GRE	• When you register for the GRE, you will be asked to indicate where your official scores will be sent. • Refer to the AAVMC website for a complete list of VMCAS GRE score codes. Be sure to use the right codes! Do not guess. • There is not one single VMCAS GRE code; each veterinary program has its own code, which is different than the school's regular GRE code, so you must provide *all* of the VMCAS GRE codes for all of your schools of interest.
Take GRE	*May be taken **after** submitting common application, if necessary.* • Deadline: Take GRE by August 15th

Start Common App, Submit Transcripts	• By end of July
Submit Common Application	• By August 15
Submit Supplemental Applications	• By August 15th
Letters of Recommendation submitted	• By August 15th

Application Fee Assistance	A limited number of VMCAS application fee waivers are available to financially disadvantaged applicants each year and are granted on a first-come, first-served basis, so you should apply in mid-May of your application year. Note: Your fee waiver request must be received and processed *before* you submit your VMCAS application. If you receive a fee waiver, you may apply to one program through VMCAS for free. If you choose to apply to more than one program, you will pay the regular fee for each additional designation. You also will be responsible for paying each school's supplementary application fee.

Letters of Recommendation	Each veterinary school sets its own guidelines regarding letters of evaluation; refer to their websites for details on their specific assortment requirements. **Please provide each of your evaluators with a copy of our *Pre-Health Guidelines to Recommenders* form.** As a general guideline, the following assortment meets most veterinary schools' requirements: 1. One from a science* faculty member who has taught you in a science lecture or seminar course and can comment upon your intellectual engagement as a student. 2. One veterinarian who has supervised your work as a veterinary assistant over a long period of time. Ask this person to comment upon your understanding of the profession, your passion for veterinary medicine, your approach to working with the animals, and your communication skills with clients and colleagues. 3. One supervisor from a long-term work or volunteer experience that was important to you. Ask this person to attest to your intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. *Science, for the purposes of applying to DVM programs, is defined as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (CU Boulder prefixes: MCDB, EBIO, IPHY, NRSC, CHEM, PHYS; note that writing and statistics courses taken in these departments are not considered "science.") **A note about advisor letters/Pre-Health Committee Letters of Evaluation:** Some DVM programs give you the option of including a letter from a pre-health advisor letter in your LOR assortment. We regret that we are unable to offer advisor letters to our students, with the exception of students who complete our Post-Baccalaureate Health Professions program and complete all of the steps (and meet all deadlines) in our Committee Letter Process. This process begins in the fall semester of the academic year before your application cycle and takes ~8 months to complete. Please visit www.colorado.edu/ceprehealth > Letters of Recommendation for details.