



PUT IN THE WORK
Earning the VTS-EVN distinction requires 8000 hours of credentialed work experience, along with other benchmarks.

SPECIALTY SPOTLIGHT

VTS (Equine Veterinary Nursing)

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Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians, Executive Director

I floundered for several years after high school before finding my way to veterinary technology, and it was 7 more years of clinical work before I found my true love of equine nursing. When I finally landed in a fast-paced large animal referral practice, I knew I had found my calling. Equine colic surgeries, advanced imaging, and even foal plasma transfusions—the medicine fascinated me daily and drove me to learn constantly. One day my supervisor told me about veterinary technician specialties and after reviewing the VTS Equine Veterinary Nursing (VTS-EVN) requirements, I set my sights to earn that distinction.

How to Get Started

The process begins years before the application starts. It takes time to not only learn but hone the many skills that an equine veterinary nursing technician needs. Visit aevnt.org to read through the requisites, check your current skills against the skills list requirements, and build up your equine-related CE to get ready.

WHAT IT TAKES

Let's start off with the basic requirements:

- You must be a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician in good standing, with memberships in the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) and the American Association of Equine Veterinary Technicians and Assistants (AAEVT).
- You must have accumulated 4 years (8000 hours) of credentialed work experience with at least 5000 hours working within the specialized area of equine veterinary nursing.
- This time must be immediately preceding your application submission. Maternity leave, workers' compensation leave, FMLA leave, and sick and vacation time should all be considered and do not count toward overall work experience hours.
- You will need to acquire 50 hours of RACE-approved continuing education (CE). This can be completed in the 3 to 4 years leading up to your application.

The application process itself takes about 2 years. You will gather case studies and work on your skills list from May 1 of the preceding year to April 30 of the application year. Out of these cases, you will choose which ones best highlight the variety of skills you possess. You will need to hand in 50 to 75 brief case logs. From those brief case logs, you will choose 5 cases to write detailed case reports. These case reports are your chance to prove not only your understanding of patient care but your understanding of what is happening at a deeper level. For example, the rate of IV fluids was changed, but why? What did the blood work reveal and how does that relate to the nursing care going forward? How did the patient's physical support the findings? This is a chance to showcase your expertise and skills, without crossing the line of the scope of practice.



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WHO DECIDES

The application packet is due electronically by May 1 of your application year. The applications are reviewed by the Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians (AEVNT) application committee, which is composed of current VTS-EVN members. The application review process includes a review by 2 to

3 members of the organizing committee. Candidates whose applications are accepted then move forward in the process to take the final exam in December. Make sure to spend ample amounts of time on your unfamiliar skills/knowledge, but don't forget the basics either—anatomy and physiology are a critical part of VTS knowledge.

WHAT IT COSTS

The most important cost factor that many people do not plan for is the cost of their own time. If you ask any VTS, they will probably tell you it was well worth it, but it does require making sacrifices, including time away from family or friends. The required CE adds up, which either you or your employer will need to pay for, and may also include travel and time away from work. Additional considerations include the \$50 application fee, \$150 exam fee, and \$50 annual dues, as well as membership fees to NAVTA and AAEPV.

BENEFITS OF BEING A VTS-EVN

Achieving the VTS-EVN is a mile marker, but to most of us, it is not the end of our accomplishments or growth. When I completed my VTS application, I saw the possibility of filling gaps on my CV by pursuing publishing and research. Those things are not required, but they stuck with me and they became my next challenges after obtaining my VTS. Within a year of becoming a VTS-EVN, I had the opportunity to work on a book. Ten years after being a VTS-EVN, I got my name on my first research paper.

Opportunities come to you with the credentials, although many of our members don't get extra pay or benefits from their employers. I was fortunate that the small animal VTS trailblazers in front of me helped spur my employer to provide us with recognition and remuneration. Regardless of what your employer does, there can be other financial benefits, including being paid to write, speak, and teach. Your résumé can rise to the top of the pile with the extra credentials, and you can grow your network of like-minded people that you can always call upon. **TVN**

Sue Loly

Sue is a member and the executive director of the Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians. She began her career in a rural mixed practice, followed by several years in a small animal and exotic bird practice before moving to large animal practice and academia. She has co-edited both editions of *Large Animal Medicine for the Veterinary Technician*, in addition to multiple other smaller publications. She also holds a bachelor's degree in communication and technical writing. Sue is an emergency case junkie who loves inspiring and supporting the growth of other veterinary nurses/technicians and enjoys sharing her knowledge by lecturing at conferences.

