MAKE THE GRADE
Applicants seeking a VTS (Dermatology) designation must complete a series of requirements demonstrating their skills and experience.

SPECIALTY SPOTLIGHT

VTS in Dermatology

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The mission of the Academy of Dermatology Veterinary Technicians (ADVT) is to promote excellence in the discipline of veterinary dermatology by demonstrating an advanced proficiency of dermatologic procedures, working with the veterinary team and client to advocate superior patient care, and providing cutting-edge continuing education.
Dermatology conditions are common in small animal patients. Our goal was to not only include veterinary nurses/technicians working in veterinary dermatology specialty practices and universities but also provide a veterinary technician specialist (VTS) opportunity for those working in private practice. The academy aims to enhance the skills and knowledge of veterinary nurses/technicians and promote them as integral members of the veterinary dermatology team.

HISTORY OF THE ADVT

The history of the ADVT began many years ago after NAVTA announced the formation of the Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties (CVTS) in the July 1994 edition of the Veterinary Technician journal. The first step mentioned in the process was to identify others with the same interest in a specialized discipline. An inquiry to the NAVTA executive director via postal mail (yes, this was prior to websites and email) was sent to determine if any groups were working on a dermatology specialty.

Once given the go-ahead to proceed, our founding group began the tedious process of developing the proposed academy infrastructure (i.e., creating bylaws, a constitution, committees, a website, and a listserv). It took us quite a few years to have enough credentialed veterinary technicians that shared the same passion for dermatology while also meeting the requirements to serve on the organizing committee. Eventually, we found qualified veterinary technicians at the North American Veterinary Dermatology Forum (NAVDF) continuing education events and had sufficient numbers that met the criteria for an organizing committee. The authors are among the 8 organizing committee members who helped develop a petition to submit to the CVTS. After receiving support from the American College of Veterinary Dermatologists, we submitted our petition to the NAVTA CVTS and received provisional recognition in 2015 and became the 12th recognized specialty. The organizing committee members earned the ADVT VTS Charter Member designation when they took the first VTS examination administered in 2017.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested credentialed technicians can refer to the ADVT’s website (vetdermtech.org) for the most up-to-date details on the application process. To start the initial process, an Applicant Information and Work Experience Form (obtained from the website) is submitted along with a fee. Once the application has been reviewed and approved, the applicant will be sent a packet that includes all the forms and information needed to begin the credentialing process. Credential packets expire after a 3-year period.

REQUIREMENTS

The eligibility process to sit for the exam requires the applicant to submit proof of their credential as well as hours worked in the field of dermatology, skills performed, case logs, and case reports to show their knowledge and experience in the field. Submission requirements include:

- Being a veterinary technician or veterinary nurse who is credentialed as such in the United States, Canada, or other country with a recognized licensing or credentialing process
- NAVTA membership
- Associate membership of the American Academy of Veterinary Dermatology (strongly encouraged but not required)
- Three years (with a minimum of 4000 hours) work experience or its equivalent in the field of veterinary dermatology; all experience must be completed within 5 years prior to the application
- Minimum of 40 RACE-approved (or its equivalent) credits in dermatology continuing education within the last 5 years immediately prior to application submission; at least 10 of those credits must be completed within a 2-year period of submission
- Completion of a dermatology veterinary nurse/technician skills and knowledge list that demonstrates their proficiency in advanced dermatologic abilities. These need to be verified by a DVM or VTS and, along with a case log, must be obtained over a 1-year timeframe within a 3-year
period immediately preceding the application submission.

- Two letters of recommendation
- Three case reports with a preference for representation of at least 2 different species. Each case report should represent only one of the designated dermatologic categories (allergic, autoimmune, infectious, parasitic, or endocrine).

**ELIGIBILITY AND COSTS**

Credential packets along with a fee are due on August 1 of any given year. If the applicants are approved by the Regents of the Academy (based on the Credentials Approval Committee recommendations), they are notified 6 months prior to the examination date. Once accepted, the applicant will be eligible to sit for the next VTS (Dermatology) exam, which is typically offered at least every other year and held at the NAVDF. Candidates are encouraged to join a study group with peers who have also qualified to sit for the examination.

The costs associated with the entire process are distributed over 2 to 3 years to make it more affordable for the applicant. Many applicants have employers that may help with finances (e.g., fees, CE expenses).

Successful examination candidates will achieve the title of VTS (Dermatology) and receive their membership number after submission of 5 acceptable exam questions. Annual membership dues are required at the beginning of each fiscal year. To remain a certified VTS (Dermatology), it is required to complete 60 CE units in veterinary dermatology and demonstrate professional development in a 5-year period.

**BENEFITS OF OBTAINING A VTS (DERMATOLOGY)**

Obtaining a VTS in dermatology can be an extremely rewarding investment in a person’s career and opens the door for many other opportunities such as lecturing, teaching, and authoring articles and book chapters. Additional benefits include involvement in the advancement of our field by serving on committees and mentoring others interested in dermatology. So many pets suffer from dermatologic conditions and their owners struggle to provide relief to their beloved family members. By achieving advanced certification in dermatology, our role in helping these patients is elevated, which can be very gratifying! **TVN**

**Carol George**
Carol graduated from Columbus Technical College in 1982. After 4 years in private practice, she worked at The Ohio State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital for over 6 years. It was there that her interest in dermatology developed. A move to Minnesota with her husband led her to working at a private veterinary dermatology practice for more than 23 years. Carol is currently working part time in a mixed small animal/exotic medicine practice and is assistant teaching at a local technical college. She has chaired roundtable discussions at the North American Veterinary Dermatology Forum, is published in the Derm Dialogue, and has authored journal articles. She is the treasurer and 1 of 8 charter members of the Academy of Dermatology Veterinary Technicians (ADVT). Carol is a mother of 2 and has a German shepherd and Maltese poodle mix. In her spare time, she loves to sing, travel, and camp with family and friends.

**Sandra Grable**
Sandra graduated in 1999 from Parkland College’s veterinary technology program in Champaign, Illinois, and began work at the University of Illinois Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. In 2001, she joined the dermatology and otology service at the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital and remained until her retirement in 2021. Her professional interests include mycology, skin cytology, and video otoscopy. She has written a book chapter on dermatophytosis for veterinary nurses/technicians, chaired roundtable discussions at the North American Veterinary Dermatology Forum, written journal articles, and given several lectures. She is 1 of 8 charter members of the ADVT. Sandra is also an Air Force veteran and enjoys traveling in her RV, fishing with her family, creating mosaics, and spending time with her English mastiff and 2 cats.

**Kim Horne**
Kim graduated from the University of Minnesota Waseca Technical College. After working in a few private practices, she joined the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center and found her career passion in dermatology. Although she has recently retired, Kim is still active in her state association, the Minnesota Association of Veterinary Technicians, and is a charter member of the ADVT. She was the ADVT’s first president and is currently serving as secretary and Exam Committee Chair. Kim has lectured both nationally and internationally, authored journal articles, and served as co-editor of the *Small Animal Dermatology for Technicians and Nurses* book.