



**LET'S GET PHYSICAL**  
Jessica Bowditch, a veterinary nurse with a VTS (Physical Rehabilitation), works with a canine patient undergoing underwater treadmill hydrotherapy.

## SPECIALTY SPOTLIGHT

# VTS in Physical Rehabilitation

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I worked as a veterinary nurse for a few years before realizing that I wanted to challenge myself and my knowledge of veterinary medicine. I knew I loved being a veterinary nurse, along with the technical, problem-solving, and nursing skills that come with the role, but I wanted to be better and to do better for my patients. I wanted to become a veterinary technician specialist. So, I searched for a specialty that would combine my love of anatomy and physiology with the use of technical and nursing skills, all while looking at the big picture and caring for the patient as a whole. I found that pursuing a specialty in physical rehabilitation would satisfy this passion.



As a physical rehabilitation veterinary nurse, I am always hearing, “this room is so colorful” and “you’re so lucky you get to swim with animals all day!” Yes, my job is colorful, and yes, I do get to swim with some patients, and yes, I do have fun, but it is a lot more than what people see. For example, that colorful physioball is one of many tools that help provide support for a neurologic patient who is relearning how to walk. Also, the patient I am swimming with is recovering from supraspinatus tendinopathy and is trying to regain tensile strength via resistance while using the water buoyancy and warmth for pain relief.

There is a lot of thought that goes into an individualized therapeutic exercise plan. Becoming a VTS in physical rehabilitation means possessing superior knowledge of and providing expert-level medical care to manage common conditions seen within physical rehabilitation. Veterinary nurses/technicians with this specialty are dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of their colleagues, patients, and owners while managing applications of therapeutic treatments and modalities within a specified treatment plan. These plans should be executed with exemplary ability to assess pain in animals while effectively communicating rehabilitative plans or treatments to pet owners and industry leaders.

## ACADEMY OF PHYSICAL REHABILITATION VETERINARY TECHNICIANS HISTORY

The Academy of Physical Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians (APRVT) organization began in 2012. It was previously known as the American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians, which was under the auspices of the American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians but was dissolved after a leadership change.

With passion for the specialty still brimming, a team of charter members, including an integral veterinarian mentor, decided to pursue the formation of the APRVT in order to continue advancement of the veterinary nursing profession in this area. After years of hard work, vision, and passion, a petition for specialty academy formation was submitted to the NAVTA Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties (CVTS) for recognition. The CVTS accepted this petition and the APRVT became a provisionally recognized veterinary technician specialty in March of 2017.

## APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

The APRVT application consists of 2 phases: preapplication and final application. The first phase of the application consists of documentation of a work history as a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician, filling out waivers/agreement forms, meeting a points-based participation system, documentation of specialty-specific continuing education, and selection of a veterinary mentor. The final application phase of the process includes updated documentation previously provided in phase 1 as well as submission of detailed case logs, proof of physical rehabilitation-specific skills demonstrating proficiency without coaching or prompting, and case reports showcasing their knowledge and skills of physical rehabilitation.

A successful application relies on reading the full application experience requirements and necessary documentation prior to starting and submitting the preapplication as there are specific eligibility

### BOX 1

#### Phase I (Preapplication Requirements)

- Letter of intent
- Curriculum vitae
- 2 letters of recommendation
- Mentorship by an approved veterinary mentor
- Signed agreements, liability waivers, and acknowledgment forms
- Points system preview
- Submission of diploma as proof of graduation from an AVMA-accredited veterinary technology program
- Fulfillment of requirements to practice as a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician and provide proof of license (or regional equivalent)
- Projected experience requirements and hours worked after becoming a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician with documentary evidence
- Projected continuing education requirements with detailed documentary evidence



requirements that need to be met to apply. See **BOX 1** for a full preapplication and **BOX 2** for a final application checklist. To review each step in full detail, visit the academy's website at [aprvt.com](http://aprvt.com).

## APPLICATION WINDOW AND FEES

The current APRVT application window is January to January. The preapplication is submitted 1 year prior to final application submission, both due January 1 at 11:59:59 PM CST. For example, if a preapplication is submitted in January of 2024, the final application would be submitted in January of 2025. The final application would then be reviewed and, if approved, the applicant would sit for the examination in the fall of 2025 (a minimum of 8 months to study from application submission). The application fee is a nonrefundable \$75 and must be submitted with the final application. If an application is accepted, a \$100 fee is due in order to take the exam.

## CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

To remain a VTS (Physical Rehabilitation) in good standing with active membership privileges, a member must submit dues each year (\$45) and must recertify every 5 years. Recertification demonstrates to the APRVT that a member is continuing to uphold the highest standard in their field while fulfilling the organization's mission statement of "providing assistance in veterinary physical rehabilitation, encouraging veterinary professionals and colleagues to further education, while improving the quality of

### Jessica Bowditch

Jessica earned her associate degree in veterinary technology from Baker College in Jackson, Michigan. Before joining Purdue University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital in 2015, she spent 2 years gaining clinical experience at a general practice animal hospital. At Purdue, she is the point person for all rehabilitation services and needs and is involved with all aspects of rehabilitation treatment, including patient assessment, treatment plans, and client education. Jessica is a frequent lecturer in Purdue's veterinary nursing program, received her veterinary technician specialty in physical rehabilitation in 2020, and is certified in canine rehabilitation and Fear Free.



## BOX 2

### Phase II (Final Application Requirements)

- Updated curriculum vitae
- Mentorship request form/agreement form
- Signed agreements, liability waivers, and acknowledgment forms
- Submission of diploma as proof of graduation from an AVMA-accredited veterinary technology program
- Fulfillment of requirements to practice as a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician and provide proof of license (or regional equivalent)
- Updated experience requirements and hours worked after becoming a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician with documentary evidence
- Points system final
- Updated continuing education requirements with detailed documentary evidence
- Completion of 90% of the advanced skills list and 60% of the equipment list
- Completion of a minimum of 40 case logs
- Four detailed case reports correlating to case logs
- Evidence of current NAVTA membership
- Five prospective exam questions

animals' lives." This includes collecting a total of 500 points in different areas of professional development, including but not limited to continuing education, presentations, publications, and academy service. Members not wishing to recertify via points accumulation may sit for the next examination.

## SUMMARY

Attaining a VTS in physical rehabilitation credential is not only self-satisfying but also allows for continued personal and professional growth by creating new avenues for learning, networking, and teaching within this amazing veterinary industry. It increases utilization of veterinary nurses/technicians and respect amongst colleagues, improves partnerships in medical care, and elevates overall job satisfaction. Most importantly, it means providing the best medicine while increasing the quality of life for our patients and their owners. **TVN**