

National Association of Veterinary Technician in America Policy on Assistant Training

Introduction

Veterinary technicians work more efficiently when they have an individual who can assist them in the completion of their responsibilities. Therefore, National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) recognizes the vital role of assistants on the veterinary health care team and further understands that assistants may be more effective/efficient if they are provided formal training in certain tasks. Assistant Training programs must emphasize the role of all members of the team and are responsible for educating both students and their potential employers on proper delegation to the assistant. Any tasks delegated to the assistant must be under the direct supervision of the veterinarian or veterinary technician.

Role of the Members of the Veterinary Health Care Team

NAVTA supports the following terminology pertaining to the titles of the members of the veterinary health care team. “Veterinary Technician Specialists” (VTS). These individuals possess advanced certification from a specialty Organization recognized by NAVTA.

“Veterinary Technology” is the science and art of providing professional support service to veterinarians in the practice of their profession.

“Veterinary Technician” is a person who has graduated from a two- or three-year, AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology.

“Veterinary Technologist” is a graduate of a four-year, AVMA-accredited program who holds a baccalaureate degree from such study.

“Laboratory Animal Technician” is a person whose academic training, knowledge and skills have been limited to laboratory animals.

The adjectives, “animal,” “veterinary,” “ward,” or “hospital” combined with the nouns “attendant,” “caretaker,” or “assistant” are titles sometimes used for individuals where training, knowledge, and skills are less than that required for identification as a veterinary technician, veterinary technologist, or laboratory animal technician.

Essentials Requirements for Assistant Programs

1. Courses to accomplish the training of assistants may be offered through high schools, informal short courses, and certificate programs at community colleges, and distance- learning programs.
2. Minimum requirements include an affiliation with an AVMA-accredited program in veterinary technology. This affiliation should be one which facilitates the acquiring of additional education from the assistant level to veterinary technician for those individuals that choose to continue on with a career in veterinary technology.

3. A working relationship should be developed with the national, state and local veterinary technician association and individuals from these associations should be appointed to the program's Advisory Committee.
4. The assistant program courses must be taught by credentialed veterinary technicians and/or licensed veterinarians.
5. The program should encompass a minimum of 150 contact hours, including a significant number of hours devoted to hands-on training with live animals in the work place or classroom laboratory.
6. The curriculum should be task oriented and additional basic tasks may be added to the skills list but must not encroach on essential areas of study for veterinary technicians.
7. A mechanism must be in place to evaluate the student's progress both on the didactic material and with hands-on skills.

Tasks Appropriate to Delegate to the Assistant

When identifying those tasks which are appropriate for an assistant to complete, the determining factor in assigning tasks to the assistant is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome. In developing the following list of tasks which the assistant may be trained to perform, each task was evaluated for appropriateness based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

1. What is the impact of the task on a positive patient outcome?
2. Could/would the average client perform the task?
3. Does it change the physiologic state of the patient?
4. Does the information obtained, impact the veterinarian's diagnosis?

It is essential to remember that the completion of all assistant tasks requires some degree of supervision either by the veterinarian or the credentialed veterinary technician. The following delineation of tasks, appropriate for delegation to the assistant on the veterinary health care team, was developed through a cooperative effort between NAVTA, the Association of Veterinary Technician Educators (AVTE), and the AVMA's Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities. Educating assistants on tasks beyond the scope of this list is discouraged.

Essential Skills for Assistant Training

I. Office and Hospital Procedures

A. Front Desk

- 1) Greet Clients
- 2) Demonstrate proper Appointment Scheduling and make appointments
- 3) Prepare appropriate certificates for signature
- 4) Admit patients
- 5) Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records
- 6) Perform basic veterinary medical record keeping procedures
- 7) Demonstrate elementary computer skills

- 8) Utilize basic medical terminology
- 9) Perform basic invoicing, billing, and payment on account procedures

B. Telephone

- 1) Answer and direct phone calls
- 2) Recognize and respond appropriately to veterinary medical emergencies, by notifying the appropriate hospital personnel
- 3) Request records and information from other veterinary facilities

C. Maintain basic cleanliness and orderliness of a veterinary facility

- 1) Inventory supplies
- 2) Restock Shelves
- 3) Maintain x-ray, surgery, and laboratory logs
- 4) Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records, radiographs, lab reports, etc.
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of basic cleaning techniques of animal kennels and bedding, examination rooms, hospital facilities, and surgical suites.

II. Communication and Client Relations

- A. Develop effective client communication skills.
- B. Write business letters.
- C. Understand ethical conduct in relationship to the day to day operations of a veterinary hospital.
- D. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the veterinary health team and the important part that each plays in the delivery of excellent care.

III. Pharmacy and Pharmacology

A. Legal Issues

- 1) Recognize legal issues involving drugs in the workplace
- 2) Recognize general types and groups of drugs and demonstrate proper terminology
- 3) Differentiate prescription drugs from over-the-counter drugs and describe proper prescription label requirements

B. Filling medications and inventory control

- 1) Label and package dispensed drugs correctly.
- 2) Store, safely handle and dispose of biological and therapeutic agents, pesticides, and hazardous waste.
- 3) Perform inventory control procedures including restocking supplies and checking expiration dates.

C. Vaccinations

- 1) Reconstitute vaccines and be familiar with proper protocols.
- 2) DESCRIBE possible routes and methods of drug and vaccine administration that the veterinarian or veterinary technician may choose.

IV. Examination Room Procedures

A. Restrain Patients

- 1) Small Animals
 - b. Place and remove small animals from cages
 - c. Place and restrain small animals on tables
 - d. Apply dog and cat safety muzzle
 - e. Apply Elizabethan collar
 - f. Apply restraint pole
- 2) Restrain Birds and Exotics - optional
- 3) Large Animals - optional
 - a. Halter, tie, and lead horses and cattle
 - b. Restrain cattle & horses
 - c. Apply twitch
 - d. Apply nose tongs/leads
 - e. Restrain sheep & swine
 - f. Load large animals.

B. Basic Procedures

- 1) Determine and record Temperature, Pulse, Respiration, and Weight of pets
- 2) Trim nails (dogs, cats, and birds)
- 3) Express anal sacs using the external method
- 4) Identify external parasites: mites, lice, fleas, ticks
- 5) Recognize common dog and cat breeds
- 6) Bathe and groom animals
- 7) Be familiar with small animal nutritional requirements

V. Surgical Preparation and Assisting

A. Assist in Performing surgical preparations

- 1) Prepare surgical equipment/supplies
- 2) Sterilize instruments & supplies using appropriate methods
- 3) Identify common instruments
- 4) Identify common suture materials, types, and sizes
- 5) Assist the veterinarian and/or veterinary technician with preparation of patients using aseptic technique
- 6) Operate and maintain autoclaves
- 7) Describe operating room sanitation & care
- 8) Assist with positioning of surgical patients
- 9) Aid the veterinarian/and or veterinary technician with physical monitoring of recovering surgical patients

B. Facility and Equipment Cleanliness

- 1) Maintain proper operating room conduct and asepsis
- 2) Perform post-surgical clean up

- 3) Fold surgical gowns and drapes

C. Have knowledge of:

- 1) Surgical equipment
- 2) Surgical room and prep area
- 3) Instruments
- 4) Proper disposal of hazardous medical wastes

VI. Small Animal Nursing (Large Animal Nursing - optional)

A. Safety Concerns

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge of basic normal and abnormal animal behavior
- 2) Utilize patient & personnel safety measures
- 3) Identify potential Zoonotic diseases
- 4) Describe Isolation procedures
- 5) Describe hazardous waste disposal
- 6) Describe basic sanitation

B. Animal Care

- 1) Provide routine record-keeping, and observation of hospitalized patients, I.E. stress importance of notations made when cleaning and feeding
- 2) Demonstrate a basic understanding of common diseases and medical conditions
- 3) Monitor/restrain patients for fluid therapy and record observations
- 4) Hand pilling (dog, cat)
- 5) Apply and remove bandages to healthy animals - (equine leg and tail wraps - optional)
- 6) Perform therapeutic bathing, basic grooming, and dipping of small animals
- 7) Clean external ear canals
- 8) Prepare food & prescription diets - be aware of any special dietary needs
- 9) Clean & disinfect cages, kennels, & (stalls - optional)
- 10) Provide care & maintenance of nursing equipment

VII. Laboratory Procedures

A. Technical Assistance in the laboratory

- 1) Collect voided urine samples
- 2) Determine physical properties of urine including color and clarity
- 3) Assist in the collection of blood samples for procedures
- 4) Collect voided fecal samples for parasitologic exam
- 5) Prepare fecal flotation solutions and set up fecal flotations
- 6) Assist in necropsy procedures
- 7) Explain how to handle rabies suspects & samples safely
- 8) Handle disposal of dead animals

B. Laboratory Record Keeping

- 1) Ensure all lab results are accurately recorded

- 2) Stock lab supplies
- 3) File lab reports

VIII. Radiology & Ultrasound Imaging

- A. Follow recommended safety measures
- B. Assist the veterinarian and/or the veterinary technician in the completion of diagnostic radiographs and ultrasound including the restraint and positioning of patients
- C. Process diagnostic radiographs
- D. Use hand and automatic processing in darkroom
- E. Maintain quality control
- F. Label, file, and store film and radiographs
- G. Properly care for equipment
- H. Clean screens
- I. Know safety techniques for handling chemicals

NAVTA's Evaluation Protocol for Assistant Training Programs

In order for assistant training programs to meet the curricular guidelines of the NAVTA Education Committee the following standards must be met:

There should be a licensed veterinarian or credentialed veterinary technician teaching the courses - affiliation with an AVMA-accredited veterinary technician education program is recommended.

Course content should follow the established NAVTA Guidelines for Assistant Programs.

Tasks covered must be appropriate for the assistant to perform.

The presence of five or more tasks in the curriculum which are not covered by the NAVTA guidelines constitutes grounds for not meeting the curricular guidelines.

If the program does not meet the curricular guidelines - the program may respond in writing as to why they feel it is necessary to cover tasks not included in the NAVTA guidelines for Assistant Programs.

There should be a clearly defined mechanism in place for evaluating student's progress. This should be in the form of both written and practical competencies. Lack of a mechanism for evaluating student's progress will result in the program not meeting the curricular guidelines of the NAVTA Education Committee.

The NAVTA Education Committee will review the curriculum for training assistants. The Committee will consist of the Chair who is also the NAVTA Recording Secretary and the Committee's representative to the Executive Board, plus five other members. Two will be NAVTA members and three will be AVTE/NAVTA members. Committee members will serve a 2- year term. Committee members shall not be involved in assistant training.

The initial review fee will be \$250. The biennial renewal fee will be \$100.

The Education Committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Board to either, provide the program with the acknowledgment that the program has met the curricular guidelines set forth by the NAVTA Education Committee or inform the program of the deficiencies that kept such a designation from being given.

The acknowledgment that the assistant program has met the curricular guidelines set forth by the NAVTA Education Committee will be good for two years. At that time - a request for review of the curriculum should be submitted along with a description of any changes made in the program since the last review.

All materials should be submitted directly to the NAVTA, P.O. Box 224, Battle Ground, IN 47920

Programs are welcome to submit curricula anytime during the year, however reviews will take place twice a year. Curricula should be submitted by February to be reviewed in April. Curricula should be submitted by September to be reviewed in November.

Assistant Program Review Summary Sheet - For Program Use

Name of Curriculum: _____

Address/Phone Numbers: _____

Contact Person: _____

The following should be submitted to the NAVTA Education Committee in order to have your curriculum reviewed as to whether it meets the curricular guidelines of the Committee.

1. Program brochure or information sheet.
2. Program overview showing each unit/module, which indicates the length of time it takes to complete the unit.
3. An outline from each unit/module should be submitted which should clearly indicate the amount of time spent in lecture and lab for the unit.
4. A brief summary should be provided on the mechanisms utilized to evaluate competency.
5. A listing of instructors for the program should be provided including their title, and highest degree earned.
6. An example of a lecture/lab session for each unit should be submitted.
7. Indicate which, if any, AVMA-accredited veterinary technology education program the assistant program is affiliated with.
8. Indicate what if any certificate of completion/degree is awarded to those who complete the program.
9. Provide an estimate of the number of students currently enrolled in the program.
10. Provide numbers to indicate how many have completed the program.
11. Provide a list of text books used by the students.