Veterinary Nurse Training at Isabelle Vets

Many people may wonder what training a Veterinary Nurse has undertaken at the Practice. We are proud of our staff and it is important that our clients recognise the skills, abilities and dedication that they possess.

Isabelle Vets is a well-established and successful Training Practice (TP) for Veterinary Nurses - there are currently around 1,500 TPs in the United Kingdom & Channel Islands. The pass rate at Isabelle Vets is impressive and this can be attributed to dedicated, hard-working student nurses and the supportive training staff.

WHAT IS A TP (Training Practice)?

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) dictate certain strict criteria that have to be met to become a registered Training Practice (TP). As Isabelle Vets is accredited as a tier 2 practice under the RCVS Practice Standards scheme, we have the facilities required, and we have a busy and varied caseload, which is also important. As a TP we are inspected annually to ensure that standards are maintained.

Also, each TP must have members of staff that have been trained to act as clinical coaches to the student veterinary nurses (SVNs). Isabelle Vets currently has two such clinical coaches who undertake to assess SVNs during their practical skills training.

HOW TO BECOME A QUALIFIED & REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSE

The student veterinary nurses train to achieve the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. The qualification comprises a number of core units for two-thirds of the course, and the remainder on either a small animal or an equine pathway.

You must have a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grade C or above which MUST include Mathematics, English Language and a Science subject or hold an ‘Animal Nursing Assistant’ (ANA) or ‘Veterinary Care Assistant’ (VCA) qualification (with Functional Skills Level 2 in Application of Number & Communication). Alternative qualifications of a comparable or higher standard may be accepted, these would be checked on initial enrolment.

College courses (in the UK) involve either a two year course or block release study. The two year course involves attending college for one to three days a week over a year, and then doing a further year in a veterinary practice learning practical skills – this type of course is usually not practicable for Guernsey students due to the organisation of the first year. Block release study is undertaken by students already working in a TP, and is usually run over two or three years. There would be 4 or 5 two-week blocks at college each year, and for the rest of the time the students learn and practice clinical skills at the TP under the direction of a clinical coach. Work based clinical skills will be recorded using an electronic Nursing Progress Log (NPL), which provides a record of all the clinical skills that the students have learned, practiced and reached competence in.

You will also undertake a number of different examinations and assessments by the RCVS and your college which will include RCVS written and practical examinations, college examinations and assignments and work based assessments.
Alternatively, you can undertake a Veterinary Nursing Foundation or BSc Honours Degree (this is equivalent to the level 3 Diploma). Entry requirements for Degree Courses will vary according to the University, but typically include 5 GCSEs as above and an A-level in Biology. Training takes between three and four years depending on the type of course you choose, and also involves time in a training practice.

Achieving the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing will qualify the trainee as a ‘Registered Veterinary Nurse’ who will be listed with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The qualification is highly regarded and allows the holder to work not just as a veterinary nurse in Practice but will open many doors in jobs in research facilities, Universities, charities and the pharmaceutical industry. Veterinary nurses can also continue their studies to attain a Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.

WHAT DOES A VETERINARY NURSE DO?

A ‘Registered Veterinary Nurse’ may undertake a number of tasks under the direction of the Veterinary Surgeon, including:

- Nurse consultations – suture/staple removal, nail clipping, repeat doses of medication, weight monitoring & diet advice, senior pet clinics, etc……
- Dressing changes
- Administering medication
- Nursing of in-patients (general, intensive, barrier)
- Laboratory test procedures
- Taking blood samples
- Radiography
- Anaesthesia monitoring (with a Veterinary Surgeon present)
- Theatre assistance (during surgical procedures)

ALSO: “They may administer any medical treatment or minor surgery (not entering into a body cavity) under the direction of a Veterinary Surgeon”, (as quoted from ‘Veterinary Surgeon’s Act 1966 – advice on Schedule 3).

When a student nurse is training, they may perform any of the above procedures, providing a Veterinary Surgeon and/or a qualified veterinary nurse is supervising them.

For further information on Veterinary Nursing, you can visit the following websites:

- www.bvna.org.uk
- www.rcvs.org.uk
- www.caw.ac.uk

The Directors of Isabelle Vets ensure that the training of its nursing staff is to a high standard, ensuring that the Practice provides clients and patients with a professional and caring service.

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For more information see our website on www.isabellevets.co.uk/guernsey-veterinary-careers