

# Technician Utilization

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## Abstract

The veterinary technician is an integral member of the veterinary health care team. We have been educated in the care and handling of animals, the basic principles of normal and abnormal life processes, and routine laboratory and clinical procedures. All veterinary technicians work under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. While a veterinary technician can assist in performing a wide variety of tasks, they cannot diagnose, prescribe, perform surgery, or engage in any activity prohibited by a state's practice act.

## Résumé

Les techniciens vétérinaires font partie intégrante de l'équipe de soins de santé vétérinaire. Ils ou elles sont une autre paire entraînée d'yeux et d'oreilles qui participe pleinement à l'administration des meilleurs soins vétérinaires possibles pour chaque animal. Ils ou elles peuvent être plus bénéfiques que vous ne le pensez pour votre clinique si vous les habilitez à pratiquer les tâches discutées dans cet article.

## Training of Technicians

Technician are trained to:

- Obtain and record patient case histories
- Collect specimens and perform laboratory procedures
- Provide specialized nursing care
- Prepare animals, instrument, and equipment for surgery
- Assist in diagnostic, medical and surgical procedures
- Expose and develop radiographs
- Advise and educate animal owners
- Supervise and train practice personnel
- Perform dental prophylaxes
- Supervise the humane care and handling of research animals
- Assist in the implementation of research projects<sup>1</sup>

### *Obtain and record patient case histories*

In production medicine this may be a physical exam or retrieval of computer records. As technicians, we may do a complete physical exam of an animal or we may be better needed to assist in the restraint of that animal.

We also can collect information from records and analyze it in a report for the team.

### *Collect specimens and perform laboratory procedures*

This is one of the most useful areas for a technician. We can collect any specimen for laboratory procedures and in some cases even perform the needed procedure. For examples: milk cultures, urine pH, rumen pH, serum protein on calves, semen evaluations, or just collecting specimens like ear notches for BVD testing, blood for any testing, urine samples, or necropsy samples.

### *Provide specialized nursing care*

For clinics that have in-house facilities the technician can assist in treatments as prescribed by the veterinarian. A technician can also be another set of trained eyes to observe an animal or groups of animals to make informed observations.

### *Prepare animals, instrument, and equipment for surgery*

Technicians can help the veterinarian by preparing animals for surgery, by restraining animals, cleaning the area (shaving, and surgical prep), anesthesia (local blocks, epidural), while the veterinarian is getting ready or finishing something else. We also help keep the instruments and equipment clean, sterile and in working order. Most technicians are the dishwashers and autoclave keepers of the clinic. They maintain and service most of the equipment, or at least assure that it gets done.

### *Assist in diagnostic, medical and surgical procedures*

Assisting in diagnostics can range from necropsy to semen evaluation. We are again another set of trained eyes. Assisting in medical procedures like giving vaccinations when doing herd health work, or even in some cases assisting the producer in vaccinating their herd are tasks that technicians perform very well. Technicians also can assist in the surgery itself. I have helped with such things as pulling a calf from a c-section, holding the uterus while the veterinarian closed it and running the gigli wire during a fetotomy.

### *Advise and educate animal owners*

Client education can be another big area in which technicians may assist in any practice. We can help

generate newsletters, help with vaccination protocols and help inform clients of meat and milk withdrawals.

*Supervise and train practice personnel*

This might mean training other personnel in your practice but also it could mean training client personnel in such things as milker training and evaluation, the importance of withdrawals times, proper animal treatment techniques such as IM, SQ injections, IV and oral routes of administration, A.I technique evaluation and many other practices and procedures.

*Supervise the humane care and handling of research animals and assist in the implementation of research projects*

This is just another area in which the technician can be useful in. In the research field, we can assist in

projects by doing such things as evaluation, sample collection, paperwork etc.

**Conclusions**

Technicians can become a profit center for your practice by being able to perform some of these duties on their own while under indirect supervision. A technician is a very valuable person on your team. They are another set of trained eyes and ears that help to insure the best veterinary care is given to each animal.

**Reference**

1. AVMA web site: [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)