

Finally, where necropsies are carried out the veterinary technical assistant can save the veterinarian a great deal of time by preparing the cadavers, whether they be large or small animals, for the morgue under detailed scrutiny of the veterinarian. This slide series has attempted to demonstrate the varied nature of the tasks that can be performed as efficiently and successfully by the veterinary technical assistant who can play an important role by easing the burden of the tasks performed by many veterinarians and which will contribute substantially to the overall profitability of a practice.

I Believe in Animal Technicians

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Do you believe in loxatrema ovatum? Do you believe in phalocrosis? I can't answer those questions because I don't know what the words mean. When a veterinarian tells me he doesn't believe in animal technicians, I have to wonder if he really understands the terminology.

The definition of an animal technician as accepted by AVMA is as follows:

“An animal technician is a person knowledgeable in the care and handling of animals, in the basic principles of normal and abnormal life processes, and in routine laboratory and animal health care procedures. He or she is primarily an assistant to veterinarians, biological research workers, and other scientists.”

Actually, the animal technician is the assistant the veterinarian has always employed. The veterinarian's ten-year-old son holding the ether cone or delivering pigs, the veterinarian's wife giving first-aid advice as she takes a call on the telephone, or helping with the surgical preparation of an after-hours emergency case, and the retired farmer who goes along on calls to hold the halter rope or assemble the calf-puller are all animal technicians. Thinking in those terms, who is the practitioner who doesn't believe in animal technicians and can't see any use for one in his practice?

Formal training for animal technicians is the new part of the picture. The grade-schooler and the wife and the retired farmer are trained by the veterinarian, and the longer they stay on the job the more useful they become. When a new employee without any training is hired, the long slow process starts anew each time. When a graduate of a two-year college program designed for such training is hired, the training process may be equally long, but it starts and ends at much higher levels.

The newly-trained technician doesn't know the veterinarian's clients, but she knows the basic principles of handling clients. She doesn't know where you keep the ophthalmoscope, but she knows what it

is. She knows what a hematocrit and a fecal examination and a B.U.N. are. She can spread milk on an agar plate and set up an antibiotic sensitivity test. She knows the relative importance of the call from the lady whose bitch is stuck to a male dog and the call from the farmer whose cow is gushing blood from a punctured mammary vein.

If you have more veterinary work to do than you can handle, you probably need an assistant veterinarian. If you are spending too much of your time doing things other than veterinary work, you need another animal technician. The veterinarian's day should be occupied with examining patients, consulting with clients, prescribing treatment and doing surgery. Your technician should collect samples of feces, blood, milk, or urine, and perform routine tests on these specimens. She should administer medications; keep the premises clean and sanitary; obtain and record such information as the client's name and address and the patient's temperature, pulse, and respiration and the general nature of the complaint; prepare the patient, equipment, and medication for surgery; load, expose, and develop X-ray films; properly package and label the drugs you prescribe; monitor anesthesia; administer enemas; apply bandages; keep stalls, cages, runs, and feeding equipment clean and in repair; prepare surgical packs and sterilize them; prepare food and feed patients; apply proper first-aid measures to hemorrhage and fracture cases; prepare specimens to send to the laboratory; perform routine bacteriological procedures; clean teeth and trim nails; order drugs, and fill shelves and grips; answer the telephone, screen calls, and make appointments; operate the EKG; administer IV fluids; handle the laundry; keep case records; hold patients; perform euthanasia and open cadavers for post mortem examinations.

Any time you spend doing any of those things you are working at a rate of something less than \$10,000.-00 per year. If you don't mind working for that salary, you probably don't need a technician. If you can earn more than that at veterinary work, you shouldn't be doing the technical jobs.

Animal technicians are not taught to do veterinary work in accredited programs. They are taught to assist veterinarians and follow directions, but not to make decisions. They are taught that veterinarians help clients and patients, and that technicians help veterinarians. In any instance of an animal technician attempting to practice, the individual has been taught to do illegal things by his veterinarian employer, not by the school. Practice laws were being violated long before the first animal technician was trained in a college. The ultimate control of the activities of animal technicians is in the hands of the veterinarians who employ them. A scalpel, a hypodermic syringe, or an animal technician in the hands of an unscrupulous practitioner can be dangerous, but all three are essential adjuncts to good veterinary practice.

I believe in animal technicians.