

## ALTERNATIVE CAREER OPTIONS TO VETERINARY PRACTICE

### INTRODUCTION

If you decide against continuing with veterinary studies, are disappointed in your ambition to get onto the Graduate BvetMed course, or after completing the BvetMed course want to consider other career options here are some possibilities to research.

The list is not exhaustive, but covers the main related opportunities and signposts you to other sources of information. To get support in thinking about these and other ideas please book an appointment with the RVC Careers Consultant.

### SECTION ONE: JOBS WITH ANIMALS

**ANIMAL BEHAVIOURIST:** Currently an unregulated area, although two national associations oversee training and standards in the field. Experience with animals plus a degree in biological or behavioural discipline is needed. Although it may be possible to set up on your own business with your Veterinary Science degree and no further training, it is strongly recommended that you obtain further training first. The profession is small - less than 200 practitioners - but growing.

[www.abpc.org.uk](http://www.abpc.org.uk)

[www.asab.nottingham.ac.uk](http://www.asab.nottingham.ac.uk)

[www.animalbehavior.org/ABS/Guides/Careers.pdf](http://www.animalbehavior.org/ABS/Guides/Careers.pdf)

**ANIMAL CHARITIES AND WELFARE ORGANISATIONS:** There are numerous roles that might be open to you in these agencies. The most obvious job is at the chalk face as an inspector: these opportunities are rarely advertised and hotly contested when they are available. Animal care, desk based and policy roles, education officer openings, publicity and marketing jobs are other areas to consider.

A background as a volunteer may give you an edge when applying for professional roles.

[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

[www.pdsa.org.uk](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)

[www.wwf.org.uk](http://www.wwf.org.uk)

[www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

[www.bluecross.org.uk/](http://www.bluecross.org.uk/)

[www.giveusahome.co.uk](http://www.giveusahome.co.uk)

[www.charitychoice.co.uk/charities/animals](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk/charities/animals)

[www.animal-job.co.uk](http://www.animal-job.co.uk)

[www.ufaw.org.uk/index.php](http://www.ufaw.org.uk/index.php)

The Careers Group University of London runs an annual one day course on working with charities. Ask the RVC Careers Consultant for more information.

**ANIMAL NUTRITION:** The profession is unregulated in terms of being a nutritionist working with animals. However, in order to have any credibility with intending clients or employers, it might be best to take an MSc or PhD in this subject. For a more clinical role e.g. developing food and drugs for animal consumption, there are Research and Development roles in many major manufacturers' labs. The sales and marketing of these products is another specialism: much of the work involves liaising with clients such as farmers, animal welfare centres and the general public. At central government level there are jobs within agencies such as those listed under

**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES** and also in the EU institutions.

[www.nutritionociety.org.uk](http://www.nutritionociety.org.uk)

[www.adas.co.uk/](http://www.adas.co.uk/)

[www.sac.ac.uk/](http://www.sac.ac.uk/) (employ nutritionists as Researchers and Consultants)

**ANIMAL PHYSIOTHERAPY:** Treats immobility / restricted mobility by exercise and manipulation. You need a degree in (human) Physiotherapy first. This is often funded by bursaries from the NHS. Entry to accredited qualifications is through UCAS: there are some shortened courses for graduates. All degrees are highly competitive and it is usual to have done a placement in an NHS or private physiotherapy practice before applying. The RVC runs a Master's qualification in this subject for those with physiotherapy training and experience. Private courses which do not demand an initial physiotherapy degree may not lead to need to professional work. You would usually run your own animal physiotherapy practice, although there are occasionally opportunities in private practices, large veterinary practices or universities.

[www.acpat.org](http://www.acpat.org)

[www.navp.co.uk/](http://www.navp.co.uk/)

[www.tcap.co.uk/animal\\_physiotherapist/](http://www.tcap.co.uk/animal_physiotherapist/)

**Work with DOGS:** A range of roles, but, typically, this involves jobs giving structured training to dogs to socialise them or to remedy uncontrolled behaviour. In some cases, this could involve work with potential assistance dogs (e.g. guide dogs, hearing dogs) or canines involved in police / security roles. No set qualifications required, but a love for dogs and a background in dealing with them is essential. There are various professional associations which run relevant short courses and charities which recruit trainees.

[www.support-dogs.org.uk](http://www.support-dogs.org.uk)

[www.hearingdogs.org.uk/](http://www.hearingdogs.org.uk/)

[www.dogsforthedisabled.co.uk](http://www.dogsforthedisabled.co.uk)

[www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

[www.bipdt.org.uk](http://www.bipdt.org.uk)

[www.apdt.co.uk](http://www.apdt.co.uk)

**Work with HORSES:** This covers all roles in equine welfare, breeding, training and management. Horseracing, for instance, requires stud managers, trainers and bloodstock agents. Horse-riding can cover such disparate areas as running or working for riding schools and equine tourism/ specialist holidays /outdoor pursuits. Most professional bodies in this area will consider applications from those with a range of qualifications, with a strong background in animal science and specific experience with horses. The Horse Racing Forensic Laboratory demands a degree in chemistry or a similar discipline.

[www.careersinracing.com](http://www.careersinracing.com)

[www.thoroughbredbreedersassociation.co.uk](http://www.thoroughbredbreedersassociation.co.uk)

[www.hfl.co.uk](http://www.hfl.co.uk)

[www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk)

[www.abrs-info.org](http://www.abrs-info.org)

[www.hblb.org.uk/](http://www.hblb.org.uk/)

[www.britishhorseracing.com/](http://www.britishhorseracing.com/)

**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:** Working within Civil Service departments connected with animals can include laboratory work or desk based roles (ranging from basic administration to policy advice). The most obvious departments are the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency and the Institute for Animal Health. DEFRA has an "arm" called DECC which is listed under Conservation and Environmental work. Other agencies such as the Food Standards Agency may also be relevant, because of their work on diseases such as BSE.

[jobsstatic.civilservice.gov.uk/csjobs.html/index.aspx](http://jobsstatic.civilservice.gov.uk/csjobs.html/index.aspx)

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

[www.vla.gov.uk](http://www.vla.gov.uk)

[www.iah.ac.uk](http://www.iah.ac.uk)

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

**VETERINARY PATHOLOGY:** Vets may work as pathologists in a variety of environments including academia, private diagnostic practice, veterinary surveillance for DEFRA, research institutes and in industry. There is no formal need for an additional qualification in this area as on the job training may be provided. However most veterinary schools offer residency programmes and the majority of professional staff obtain a postgraduate qualification from the Royal College of Pathologists or from European or American colleges of veterinary pathology.

[www.vetpathcareers.com](http://www.vetpathcareers.com)

[www.rcpath.org](http://www.rcpath.org)

[www.ecvpath.org](http://www.ecvpath.org)

[www.acvp.org/](http://www.acvp.org/)

**MCTIMONEY CHIROPRACTIC:** McTimoney is a well established private college which teaches chiropractic and manipulation techniques for both humans and animals. It offers Master's courses in these skills to those with relevant education, background and interests.

[www.mctimoney-college.ac.uk/about/about-chiropractic/for-animals/](http://www.mctimoney-college.ac.uk/about/about-chiropractic/for-animals/)

[www.animalcareer.co.uk/](http://www.animalcareer.co.uk/)

**VETERINARY PRACTICE MANAGEMENT:** Administration of individual practices or veterinary care chains. Responsible for smooth running of all systems – patient care, record keeping, scheduling, cover etc., supervising support staff and ensuring quality, compliance and commercial success.

[www.vpma.co.uk](http://www.vpma.co.uk)

**ZOOKEEPING:** Conservation and protection of wild animals, management of their welfare. You may wish to consider gaining a certificate in Zoo Animal Management as entry to this profession is so competitive but many zoos will also consider applicants with other relevant degrees. Part time, seasonal or voluntary work in zoos, wildlife parks and animal conservation charities will boost your chances of obtaining a post. Whilst some roles are advertised zoos may also accept speculative applications. Having a driving license, first aid experience and / or a firearm certificate are also beneficial. The Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and Edinburgh Zoo run short courses.

[www.abwak.org](http://www.abwak.org)

[www.biaza.org.uk](http://www.biaza.org.uk)

[www.zoowork.blogspot.co.uk/](http://www.zoowork.blogspot.co.uk/)

## SECTION TWO: ACADEMIA

An **MSc** is the common first step to developing a career in academia, although many people will also have a **PhD**.

For courses:

[www.findamasters.co.uk](http://www.findamasters.co.uk)

[www.findaphd.co.uk](http://www.findaphd.co.uk)

You may be able to find some funding for further study:

[www.prospects.ac.uk/funding\\_my\\_further\\_study.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_my_further_study.htm)

The main jobs website for universities is [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)

## SECTION THREE: SCIENTIFIC ROLES IN INDUSTRY AND ELSEWHERE

If you enjoy the laboratory and research tasks, you may want to consider working in the broader scientific field such as Research and Development (R and D). The main possibilities are as follows:

- A. Many drug and food development companies recruit graduates from all scientific disciplines to become involved with research and development. RVC graduates would be particularly welcome in any firm dealing with animal related products but there are other, more general options.
- B. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are collaborations between the government, academia and industry. They take recent graduates to work as paid employees on fixed term research projects in designated scientific sectors, while gaining additional qualifications.
- C. The NHS and research organisations recruit trainee scientists on an annual basis supporting them through relevant higher degrees while working in salaried professional positions.
- D. The NHS, academic institutions, research councils, government agencies and pharmaceutical companies employ staff to co-ordinate and run clinical research and trials.
- E. Public health organisations take on science graduates at local, national and international level to undertake projects and research, analyse findings, disseminate information and apply their knowledge in the field.

[www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)

[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/hcsci\\_training\\_programme.shtml](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/hcsci_training_programme.shtml)[www.emedcareers.co.uk](http://www.emedcareers.co.uk)

[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/details/Default.aspx?Id=2087](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/details/Default.aspx?Id=2087)

[www.abpi.org.uk](http://www.abpi.org.uk)

[www.icr-global.org](http://www.icr-global.org)

[www.publicanalyst.com](http://www.publicanalyst.com)

[www.phorcast.org.uk](http://www.phorcast.org.uk)

[www.fph.org.uk/](http://www.fph.org.uk/)

[www.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk)

A wide variety of jobs in the human and veterinary pharmaceutical industries can be accessed with a degree in veterinary science. It is possible to gain on the job training or you may need to take postgraduate courses for specific jobs. Some of the most common opportunities are listed below, but for information on a lot more possibilities, see the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) website: <http://careers.abpi.org.uk>

## **SPECIFIC ROLES**

**SALES REPRESENTATIVE:** The sales side of the work is about marketing drugs and related products to vets and other clients. Commercial awareness is necessary but the job is about establishing relationships as well as hitting business targets. Candidates should be self starters and able to handle a great deal of autonomy.

[www.zenopa.com](http://www.zenopa.com)

[www.pharmacareers.co.uk](http://www.pharmacareers.co.uk)

[www.vetclick.com/jobs/](http://www.vetclick.com/jobs/)

**TOXICOLOGIST:** Toxicologists manage and co-ordinate projects and research which provide information for the development, safety assessment and registration of new pharmaceuticals. A veterinary science degree is a good starting point, but there is specific postgraduate training either through an MSc or on the job.

[www.thebts.org/Careers.aspx](http://www.thebts.org/Careers.aspx)

[www.thebts.org/](http://www.thebts.org/)

**TOXICOLOGICAL PATHOLOGIST:** You will need a BvetMed degree to work as a pathologist in industry but although postgraduate training in pathology or a PhD are useful these are not essential as many companies provide on the job training in this specialty.

<http://www.toxpath.org/>

<http://www.bstp.org.uk/>

**RESEARCH SCIENTIST:** You will be contributing to the discovery and development of new medicines. You will probably develop particular expertise in a biomedical science and may need to take an MSc or PhD.

[jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/](http://jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/)  
[www.naturejobs.com](http://www.naturejobs.com)

**ANIMAL TECHNOLOGIST/TECHNICIAN:** Animal technology is the specialist profession responsible for the care and welfare of animals in science in academia and industry. The career involves caring for the welfare of animals and contributing to scientific advancement. There is a well developed specialist career ladder.

[www.iat.org.uk](http://www.iat.org.uk)  
[www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla/)

**CLINICAL SCIENTIST:** Health studies in animals and humans are backed up by laboratory based sciences such as clinical pathology, haematology and histology. A veterinary science degree will provide a foundation for this type of work, but you may need to complete further training. If you work in a human sciences laboratory, you will need to become accredited. Work may involve analysing biological samples and, in some jobs, post mortems to support pathology.

[www.ibms.org/](http://www.ibms.org/)  
[www.clinicaldiscovery.com](http://www.clinicaldiscovery.com)

**REGULATORY AFFAIRS:** Checking that new drugs and products meet the necessary scientific, legal and health standards before they are put onto the market.

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)  
[www.topra.org](http://www.topra.org)  
[www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk)

## SECTION FOUR: JOBS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

**CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL WORK:** This is a huge catch all. Jobs in this sector fall into several distinct areas:

- a) Environmental consultancy: assessing, advising and educating external organisations on environmental issues and offering solutions.
- b) Central and local government: mainly planning and drawing up policies for sustainability, environmental awareness etc. Since the autumn of 2008, there is a new government organisation, the Department for Energy and Climate Change, with specific responsibility for all aspects of this topic. At local and regional level, this might also include recycling initiatives, countryside management, conservation, heritage and rights of way roles, outreach activities.
- c) Charities and development organisations: some field work and policy roles, but entry level posts are mainly desk officer, education or marketing jobs.
- d) Lobbying: publicising environmental causes, raising support and liaising with government and political organisations to bring about change.

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)  
[www.lgtalent.com](http://www.lgtalent.com)  
[www.countryside-jobs.com](http://www.countryside-jobs.com)  
[www.environmentjob.co.uk/](http://www.environmentjob.co.uk/)

[www.ciwem.org](http://www.ciwem.org)  
[www.earthworksjobs.com](http://www.earthworksjobs.com)  
[www.charityjobs.co.uk](http://www.charityjobs.co.uk)  
[www.bond.org.uk](http://www.bond.org.uk)  
[www.ethicalcareers.org](http://www.ethicalcareers.org)

The Careers Group University of London runs an annual one day “Environmental Futures” course about working in this field.

**FARM MANAGEMENT:** Running a large farm with the purpose of maximising production and profits while adhering to government and EU regulations. Farm managers usually specialise in particular areas of agriculture e.g. livestock, dairy.

[www.nfuonline.com](http://www.nfuonline.com)  
[www.farmersguardian.com](http://www.farmersguardian.com)  
[www.jobs.fwi.co.uk](http://www.jobs.fwi.co.uk)  
[www.sentry.co.uk](http://www.sentry.co.uk)

**LAND MANAGEMENT:** This covers professional level jobs such as running rural estates, surveying etc. For more details of specific careers in this category see

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

## SECTION FIVE: MEDICINE

**DOCTOR:** Many students of veterinary science are also interested in human medicine. It is hugely competitive, so excellent academic results; relevant experience and an understanding of the NHS are sought from all candidates. There are entry possibilities for the traditional undergraduate degree and for shortened graduate training. Applications for both types of course need to be in by mid October of the year before you wish to start at medical school. Each year, The Careers Group University of London offers a one day course for those who want to pursue this option.

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)  
[www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk)  
[www.medschoolsonline.co.uk](http://www.medschoolsonline.co.uk)

**PHYSICIANS' ASSISTANT:** This is an emerging occupation and likely to be an expanding area. For some medical specialities, consultants will take on physicians' assistants with a scientific background to advise patients and help with initial diagnosis and analysis of test results.

[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)  
[www.ukapa.co.uk/](http://www.ukapa.co.uk/)

## SECTION SIX: JOBS WITH A SCIENTIFIC COMPONENT

**EDUCATION OFFICER / KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER SPECIALIST:** Academic, professional and charitable organisations with a science slant are increasingly employing staff to write, present, adapt and disseminate information to the general public e.g. visiting school and community groups. This career is in its infancy at the moment, but is likely to expand. In smaller agencies, it may be combined with other duties such as press and public relations.

No career specific websites exist at the moment, but jobs are often advertised in the scientific press and in The Guardian.

[www.jobs.guardian.co.uk](http://www.jobs.guardian.co.uk)

**INFORMATION SPECIALIST:** Information managers, information scientists and specialist librarians work for commercial, scientific, academic and professional bodies. They need an in-depth understanding of their subjects in order to produce relevant data and publications for colleagues, researchers and students.

[www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)

[www.aslib.co.uk](http://www.aslib.co.uk)

**PATENT WORK:** Patent attorneys/ agents work for private companies and apply solid scientific knowledge to decide whether new inventions are original and viable and then to take them through various regulatory and legal stages. Patent examiners are employed by the UK government or the European Union to assess and ratify new inventions.

[www.cipa.org.uk](http://www.cipa.org.uk)

[www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)

**SCIENTIFIC WRITING AND PUBLISHING:** Science writers produce journals, articles, books and reports which may be aimed at those already working in the sector or at a more general readership. The publishing side deals with the commissioning, editing, production and marketing of this type of information. It is possible to enter these roles with no previous experience, but those who have been involved with student journalism may have a head start.

[www.absw.org.uk](http://www.absw.org.uk)

[www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/microbiologist\\_careers.pdf](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/microbiologist_careers.pdf)

## SECTION SEVEN: FURTHER ALTERNATIVES

**STARTING A BUSINESS:** You may want to set up your own business, possibly connected with animal care or animal products. The Careers Group University of London runs a two day course on the basics of becoming self-employed.

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

[www.bl.uk/bipc/#](http://www.bl.uk/bipc/#)

**TEACHING AND LECTURING:** Your degree would enable you to work as a primary teacher (possibly specialising in science) or as a science teacher at secondary level. You could also work as a lecturer in further education on “pure” science courses or in animal care related disciplines. University teaching would normally require further academic qualifications.

[www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk)

[www.standardsverificationuk.org](http://www.standardsverificationuk.org)

**MAINSTREAM GRADUATE CAREERS:** A veterinary science degree would allow you to enter any field of professional employment e.g. banking, law, social work that called for “graduates of any discipline”. You would need an understanding of the new sector, some work experience and possibly a further qualification.

[www.careers.lon.ac.uk](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk)

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)