

A Career as a Veterinary Dentist

Vets

Please see details under 'memberships', 'CPD Providers' and 'further qualifications' below.

Dental Hygienists & Therapists

It is not possible for hygienists or therapists to treat animals.

Dentists

The first step is to identify your reasons for pursuing this route - financial and work-hour factors are notoriously poor in the vet world despite the widespread myth to the contrary. As reported November 2010, the average wage for a fully qualified vet is £34,000, including benefits such as a practice car and accommodation - less than 50% of the average wage as a human dentist. It is certainly NOT a 9-5 job and frequently includes late evenings (typical hours are 8.30-19.00 however significant overtime, eg 12hr+ days, is commonplace and weekend clinics and 24hr cover are standard). For those who enjoy the company of animals it may be preferable to experience spending time with them in a relaxed manner as pets, keeping 'pleasure' & 'business' separate. Many animal-related charities are in desperate need of willing volunteers and beneficiaries in order to continue their work; being involved in charity work is very rewarding, brings you close to animals and provides real assistance.

In order to handle your own patients & cases you would need to be dual qualified ie add a veterinary medicine & surgery degree to your CV. If you want to pursue this it would be 5years although some universities may offer a post-graduate entry of 4 years. Bear in mind fees - £15-20K / year and its very full-time nature (all the species mean extreme workload) plus mandatory holiday work known as 'EMS' ('extra-mural study'; placements at veterinary surgeries, farms, slaughterhouses etc). This means that there is no time for a holiday job or locuming, so the financial impact is considerable. Further, specific veterinary dentistry CPD is then required to provide the missing 'link' information between the two degrees to enable you to handle all case types. ***Veterinary dentistry is more than the sum of its two parts, owing to a large extent to the differences between species and even breeds.*** Essentially then this is the equivalent training as for human maxillofacial surgeons (dual qualification plus the surgical extras). You would need this to be able to diagnose, prescribe etc.

As solely a BDS dentist, you may legally only provide dental treatment to an animal under the authority and guidance of a vet. Vets would usually see most cases themselves or utilise a vet nurse however you may find one who will take up your services. Most do not have dental xray machines etc however and you would need to source the appropriate equipment. Be aware that veterinary nurse training in dentistry is, if any, very basic; unless you provide your own dental nurse there will not be anyone that can set-up, close-down or provide four-handed nursing, especially for any restorative or endodontic procedures.

Thus, to assist a vet you don't legally need dual qualification but do need to obtain the additional CPD, equipment and nursing. If you want autonomy dual-qualification is essential, in addition to the above. Veterinary dentistry CPD courses will aid you in equipment choice and surgical techniques. ***There are numerous species differences and one cannot simply apply human dentistry to other species.*** For example a human endodontic file is far too short for use in a dog's canine tooth, caries is relatively uncommon and root anatomy makes most forceps redundant but does require involved surgical extraction. Three main post-graduate qualifications are available to prospective veterinary dentists, via European and American centres. To become an RCVS Recognised Specialist, an EVDC or AVDC Diploma is required.

Practicalities

All cases require general anaesthetic for full examination and treatment, thus numbers are very limited (eg 4/day) but obviously depending on case type. Conscious assessment is very limited thus pre-planning and estimating costs is an issue. The cost of vet dentistry is low in general, it is the general anaesthetic which is the main cost. As an example a £400 case may be £250+ of GA & sundries but take over an hour operating plus hour of preparation/ recovery etc. At present an average practice may provide this sort of caseload every 2weeks or so.

Bisecting angle technique & knowledge of species' anatomy is essential (eg see dental xray courses via website below) - parallel technique, aiming devices & OPGs are not used much if at all. Since the variety of facial shapes and sizes is so great with differing species and breeds (eg consider a greyhound vs a pug) bisecting angles cannot be derived from guide angles; each must be worked out on an individual basis.

Memberships

All prospective veterinary dentists are advised to join the BVDA (British Veterinary Dental Association) www.BVDA.co.uk This entitles you to the BVDA Journal and international journal JVD (Journal of Veterinary Dentistry). You will also benefit from reduced rates at courses, seminars and the annual Scientific Day via BVDA membership.

EVDS (European Veterinary Dental Society) membership also provides the JVD and they organise an annual meeting at rotating European cities. www.evds.info

CPD Providers

UK - CPD Solutions www.cpd-solutions.com BVDA, Improve, Orosurgeon www.orosurgeon.co.uk

Europe - Accesia (Sweden) www.accessia.se

Other – see JVD for details

An example of a thorough, basic grounding the 2day veterinary dentistry CPD course via CPD Solutions is recommended. More advanced courses are also available.

Further Qualification

EVDC: European Veterinary Dental College. www.evdc.org Successful application to either a 3year internship at an approved centre (presently nothing in the UK) or (at time of writing) the alternate pathway (from within the UK with a supervisor; approx 6years) enables initiation. Investment of time and finance is very high. Successful acceptance of credentials (assessment of annual case-logs followed by assessment of the composite years' of work) enables participation of the examination (in Europe). Successful completion of this (practical, bench & written components) delivers the qualification of EVDC Diploma.

AVDC: American Veterinary Dental College. www.avdc.org Successful application to either a 3year internship at an approved centre (presently nothing in the UK) or (at time of writing) the alternate pathway (from within the UK with a supervisor; approx 6years) enables initiation. Investment of time and finance is very high. Successful acceptance of credentials (assessment of annual case-logs followed by assessment of the composite years' of work) enables participation of the examination (in USA). Successful completion of this (practical, bench & written components) delivers the qualification of AVDC Diploma.

AVD: Academy of Veterinary Dentistry (USA). www.avdonline.org Successful application to either an internship at an approved centre (presently nothing in the UK) or (at time of writing) the alternate pathway (from within the UK with a supervisor; approx 3years) enables initiation. Investment of time and finance is high. Successful acceptance of credentials (assessment of the composite years' of work) enables participation of the examination (in USA). Successful completion of this exam delivers the qualification of FAVD (Fellow of AVD).