protect your pet...

DO YOU KNOW?

...who does what in your vet's office?

...who is licensed and who isn't?

...what to do if you are unhappy with the care your pet receives?

...know your veterinary healthcare team

CALIFORNIA VETERINARY MEDICAL BOARD | REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNICIAN COMMITTEE

what you need to know

Veterinary hospitals work a lot like human hospitals. Veterinarians are the doctors, and registered veterinary technicians are similar to registered nurses.

Most people know who the veterinarian is in a veterinary hospital, but sometimes people blur the lines between licensed and unlicensed staff. It's important to know who the staff are and the roles they play in your pet's care.

Here's an overview of who's who in veterinary healthcare.

LICENSED STAFF

VETERINARIANS (DVMs)

Veterinarians are doctors who lead the animal health care team. They are the only people qualified to diagnose medical problems, prescribe medication and treatment, and perform surgeries. They are licensed by the California Veterinary Medical Board.

REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNICIANS (RVTs)

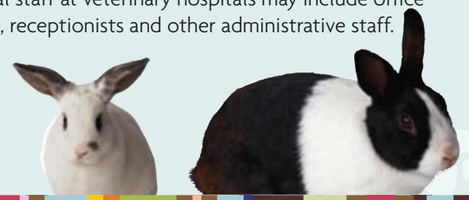
RVTs are animal nursing professionals who have completed Board-approved education and training and passed State-administered licensing examinations. RVTs perform a variety of specific veterinary medical tasks under the supervision of a veterinarian. RVTs are licensed by the Veterinary Medical Board, with input from the Registered Veterinary Technician Committee.

UNLICENSED STAFF

Unlicensed staff may administer medications and provide other medical treatment under the supervision of a veterinarian or an RVT, but are not allowed to perform tasks restricted to veterinarians or RVTs. They may not treat your pet outside a hospital setting.

SUPPORT STAFF

Additional staff at veterinary hospitals may include office managers, receptionists and other administrative staff.

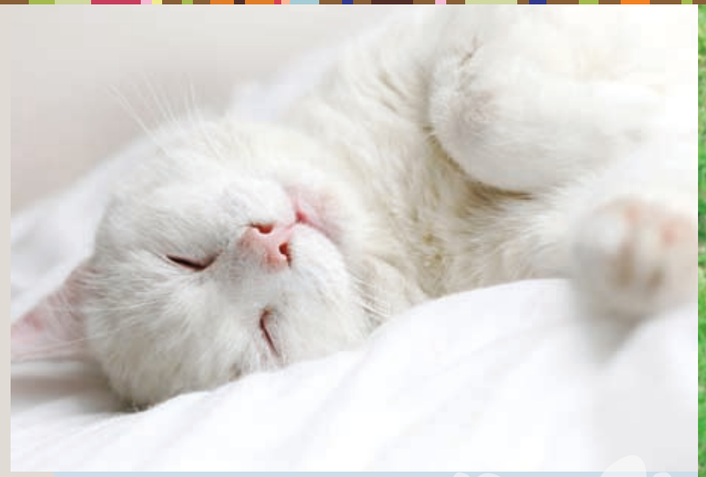


KNOW WHO DOES WHAT

Take time to meet the people who take care of your pet at the hospital and learn the roles they play in your pet's care. Although only licensed veterinarians can diagnose an animal's condition, perform surgery, and prescribe medications, RVTs and other staff have important roles in helping pets heal from injuries and in maintaining good health. With their assistance, veterinarians can operate efficiently, control costs, and provide the best care possible.

KNOW WHAT TO ASK

Ask about office hours, costs for office visits and services, emergency care after hours, payment plans, and pet insurance. For your specific pet, ask about preventive care, vaccines, feeding, and grooming.



KNOW WHO HOLDS A LICENSE

Veterinarians and RVTs are required to post their certifications in public view. Look for the licenses before you agree to any treatment. In addition, all veterinary facilities must display their premise permits in public view. Veterinarians and RVTs who provide veterinary services away from a hospital should carry a pocket version of their license to show you.

KNOW WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU

As a consumer, your rights are protected by the Veterinary Medical Board, with input from the Registered Veterinary Technician Committee. The two groups work together to regulate the delivery of veterinary care and to ensure that minimum standards are met. The Board protects you and your pets by ensuring the competency of licensees, by validating its qualifying examinations, by conducting criminal background checks before licensure, by inspecting veterinary care facilities, by investigating consumer complaints, and by diligently enforcing the laws governing veterinary medicine.

KNOW YOUR ROLE

It's up to you to know the members of your pet's healthcare team, to ask questions, and to check the licenses. It's also up to you to practice good preventive care for your pet, including regular checkups. Your pets depend on you.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

If you are unhappy with the care your pet received, the conditions at the veterinary hospital, or other related matters, you should first discuss your concerns with your vet. Many problems can be resolved at that level. If you are not satisfied, you may file a complaint with the Veterinary Medical Board.

Remember: The Board has no control over fees charged for veterinary services or payment plans.

For more information, to check a license, or to file a complaint, go online, or contact:

VETERINARY MEDICAL BOARD | REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNICIAN COMMITTEE

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