



## THE ACADEMY OF RURAL VETERINARIANS VETERINARY TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Purpose: To assess the educational experiences of practicing veterinarians and current veterinary school students—analyzing confidence levels in relation to practice situations and overall preparation for entering the field of mixed practice.

**TOTAL RESPONDENTS – 108**                      34% of current Academy Membership

61% - Practicing Veterinarians (Member/Mentors)  
39% - Student Members

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### Part I – Practicing Veterinarian Responses to Own Education

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#### Years in Practice?

22% 1-5 Years    17% 6-10 Years    13% 11-15 Years    10% 16-20 Years    38% 20+ Years

**Gender**                      71% Male    29% Female

#### Personal Experience

Practicing veterinarians were asked to rate their confidence level based on their experience as a new graduate entering the field.

Respondents rated their confidence level on a series of professional situations.

*Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.*

1 – No Confidence

2

3 – Neutral

4

5 – Very Confident

*Survey Results Continued→*

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a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	3.6
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.8
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	2.4
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	4.0
e.	Equine Colic	3.4
f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	3.2
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	3.0
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.9
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	3.0
j.	Lameness in any specie	3.3
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	3.5
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	4.1
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	2.9
n.	Expertise in business management	2.2
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	4.1
<b>Overall Confidence Level Based on Training</b>		<b>3.3</b>

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## **Part II – Practicing Veterinarian Responses Concerning New Graduates**

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### **Observations of New Graduates**

Practicing veterinarians were asked to rate the confidence level of new graduates that they have come into contact with (i.e. supervised as an intern/extern, hired, etc.).

Respondents rated the new graduate confidence level on a series of professional situations.

*Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.*

1 – No Confidence

2

3 – Neutral

4

5 – Very Confident

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a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	2.6
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.3
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	2.2
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	2.3

e.	Equine Colic	2.9
f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	3.0
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	2.5
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.7
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	2.5
j.	Lameness in any specie	2.8
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	2.9
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	3.0
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	3.4
n.	Expertise in business management	1.8
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	2.9

**Overall Confidence Level Based on Observation 2.7**

**Other factors that might influence the confidence levels of graduating veterinary students (Or what changes could be made in curriculum to better prepare students for rural practice?):**

*Narrative Summary*

The responses to this question covered three major categories. Each of these categories are explained in greater detail:

- |    |                                                         |     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | More hands-on/practical experiences needed              | 47% |
| 2. | More business management training needed                | 30% |
| 3. | Specific skills mentioned that should receive attention | 23% |

**More hands-on/practical experiences needed (47%)**

Respondents recognize the value of internships, externships and mentorships, and in every instance, noting that such experiences are crucial in the preparation of a successful mixed animal/rural veterinarian.

The following response exemplifies these responses:

“Most of the experiences in senior clinics at vet school did very little to prepare me for working in rural private practice. I gained most of my experience and confidence through working in private practices before and during vet school and on my externships spent off-campus. Vet students need to spend more time on externships working in clinics especially during senior year. The university referral hospitals offer a totally different environment and way of doing things that is often not applicable to working in a rural private practice.”

*Survey Results Continued →*

### **More business management training needed (30%)**

Respondents emphasized that veterinary students should receive additional training in the economic/business side of practice. Specific areas mentioned included: agricultural economics, practice management, business management, financial management, and food animal management. A number of respondents also mentioned that effective communications skills should also be included in training.

### **Specific skills mentioned that should receive attention (23%)**

Respondents offered a number of areas that they felt schools should provide training in order to increase student confidence and make sure that they are prepared for practice. Below is a sampling of responses chosen because they represent multiple similar submissions:

Animal behavior

More exposure to rural practices with basic ambulatory cases such as simple colics, lacerations, restraint, and sick large animals.

Many come out of school thinking that they must run every test possible before moving forward on treatment. They need to be taught how to diagnose and treat when not every last diagnostic tool is available.

On the small animal side they usually don't teach you to trim nails, express anal glands, clean ears—the things that are commonly done everyday.

Students should be familiar with large animal side issues that may not be seen very often like rectal prolapse in a feedlot steer, vaginal prolapse in a cow, suturing up a corneal ulcer in a calf, or pulling wolf teeth in a colt.

Rectal palpation either in bovine or equine species was not emphasized in the curriculum.

Equine dentition was poorly taught in the general curriculum. I had no idea how to float a horse's mouth when I graduated. I had to learn it from my boss.

Not knowing antibiotics and other therapies for large animals.

Finally, a number of these respondents focused on the fourth year of education—recommending that more opportunity should be provided for students to work with large animal species. This large animal focus carried over to the topic of teaching, as illustrated by this response:

“We need faculty that understand and appreciate the bovine. We have experience with some new grads that have been taught in clinics by equine clinicians, but have no proper understanding of bovine obstetrics, typical bovine emergencies, and no understanding of mastitis and other costly dairy diseases.”

Other respondents expressed concern over teaching faculty who were researchers or specialists—and who have had little or no practice experience.

*Survey Results Continued* →

**Where did you go to school?**

Auburn	6%	Missouri	8%
Colorado	8%	Ohio	6%
Cornell	2%	Oklahoma	2%
Georgia	2%	Oregon	6%
Illinois	6%	Purdue	8%
Iowa	15%	Tennessee	2%
Kansas	14%	Texas A&M	6%
Michigan	3%	Tufts	2%
Mississippi	2%	Washington	2%

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**Part III – Current Student Responses to Own Education**


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**What year of veterinary school are you currently in?**

**11%** 1<sup>st</sup> Year      **19%** 2<sup>nd</sup> Year      **34%** 3<sup>rd</sup> Year      **36%** 4<sup>th</sup> Year

**Gender**                      **28%** Male      **72%** Female

**At present time, do you consider rural practice a viable option for employment after graduation?**

**87 %** Definitely Yes      **8%** Possibly      **5%** Definitely No

**Personal Experience/How Confident Does Your Training Make You?**

Current veterinary students were asked to rate their confidence in dealing with situations that they may soon encounter after graduation if employed in a rural mixed animal practice.

Respondents rated their confidence level on a series of professional situations—based on their training.

*Confidence level was rated on sliding scale.*

1 – No Confidence

2

3 – Neutral

4

5 – Very Confident

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a.	Dystocia in Large Animal	3.3
b.	Dystocia in Small Animal	2.5
c.	Equine Rectal Palpation	3.2
d.	Bovine Rectal Palpation	3.5

e.	Equine Colic	3.0
f.	Acute, life threatening blood loss any specie	2.9
g.	Acute abdominal crisis, other than equine	2.6
h.	Fluid therapy, any specie	3.5
i.	Sudden death in a herd or group of animals	2.9
j.	Lameness in any specie	3.3
k.	Communicating effectively with clients	4.0
l.	Ability to handle and restrain Large Animals safely	3.6
m.	Ability to handle and restrain small animals safely	4.2
n.	Expertise in business management	2.5
o.	Familiarity with rural culture	3.5

**Overall Confidence Level Based on Training      3.2**

**Other factors that might influence your confidence level that might be taught prior to graduation:**

*Narrative Summary*

**64%** of respondents felt that they gained confidence for practicing the profession outside the classroom through “hands-on experience” such as externships or through their own personal backgrounds. Their reasons were almost equally divided among the following:

Externship experiences were the best in providing insight into rural practice.  
Student grew up in a rural community or related to a veterinarian.

The following submissions reflect the overall responses:

“I’m hoping that clinics will give me more confidence in these areas, but as of now my confidence is determined by externships and experience that I had before veterinary school.

“Most of the hands-on skills I have acquired during vet school, the kind that I will need starting the day I graduate, I did not learn at school. I learned them through my own initiative to go out on externships and in summer jobs. School gave me the “book smarts” and nothing else, and it cost me \$100,000. My responses above are those from school and are not reflective of my actual knowledge set. In other words, my answers to most of these would be, ‘no confidence’, if going to vet school was the only training I had.”

**36 %** or respondents specifically identified themselves as having come from a rural background, and noted that this life experience has been helpful in being ready for career in mixed animal practice.

***Survey Results Continued→***

29% indicated either practical skills or a specific area that they felt was lacking in their training. Among these, were responses dealing with the ability to:

- Handle nighttime emergency cases on own
- Driving standard transmission trucks
- Dealing with patients in relating death of an animal
- Small/large animal dentistry
- Large animal ophthalmology

### Where do you go to school?

California/Davis	3%	Ohio	6%
Colorado	6%	Oregon	3%
Cornell	3%	Ross University	3%
Edinburgh	3%	Texas A&M	9%
Georgia	2%	Tufts	3%
Illinois	3%	VMRCVM	5%
Iowa	9%	Washington	8%
Michigan	14%	Western University	6%
Minnesota	9%	Wisconsin	3%
Mississippi	2%		

### *End of ARV Survey Results*



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