

ACCES for Pet Health

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A Tip of the Hat to the Veterinary Technician & Assistant

By Beth Guerra, DVM



A few months ago, a group of individuals was recognized via an entire "Appreciation Week", however, most of the general public likely was unaware. National Veterinary Technician Appreciation Week was during October, and it gave veterinary professionals a chance to honor and support a hidden workforce.

Veterinary technicians are often behind the scenes, but they are the driving force of a veterinary clinic. Much like human nurses, they are the first people you encounter when your pet visits the vet, and they are the people comforting your pet, performing the diagnostic tests, and educating pet owners. They work in tandem with their doctor to make sure your visit goes smoothly.

As an emergency doctor, I rely on my core team of technicians and assistants on a daily basis. In a busy ICU setting, they are the ones that alert me to a change in a patient's condition. They provide medical care, husbandry, and often a calming word. During my graveyard shifts, when staff is down to the minimum, they are answering phones, checking in clients, and juggling treatments on multiple animals. They are cleaning up the vomit, diarrhea, and urine. They learn to anticipate my needs; often before I have even fully examined a critical animal, they are prepared to place an IV, bandage wounds, or provide oxygen. During surgery, I usually never need to ask for anything; it just magically appears on my table.



Technicians are the nurses of the veterinary world

Licensed Veterinary technicians go through two years of training at an institution with a dedicated program. They are required to pass a state board exam before they receive their LVT (licensed veterinary technician). They place IV catheters, administer medications, prepare patients for surgery, monitor anesthesia, and aid in CPR. Veterinary assistants are often trained in the workplace, either by technicians or doctors. After 5 years of experience in their field, they can "grandfather" in by taking the exam. Licensed technicians can also pursue specialties (called VTS) in many fields, including anesthesia, critical care, and internal medicine. The process is rigorous and involves a large number of case studies as well as another national exam. ACCES is fortunate to have 2 emergency and critical care technician specialists and 1 internal medicine technician specialist.



As the right-hand support of the veterinarian, technicians and assistants provide much needed support, care and compassion for patients.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the technicians and assistants I have worked with over the past nine years, in both emergency and day practice. When I was a new doctor, they were patient and kind and helped me gain confidence. As a more seasoned doctor, they keep me on my toes and still teach me new tricks.

Posted by **Christina Ryan** at December 11, 2009 4:38 p.m.

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