



Veterinary Nurse FAQs

1. What is the Veterinary Nurse Initiative?

NAVTA is forming a Veterinary Nurse Initiative coalition to pursue legislative amendments in the 50 states: (1) to establish the credential of Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN); and (2) to substitute the title of Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) for Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT), Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT), Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT) or Licensed Veterinary Medical Technician (LVMT).

NAVTA seeks to unite the profession under a single title, credentialing requirements and scope of practice. Through the standardization and public awareness of the credential, the profession will make strides towards better recognition, mobility and elevated practice standards, leading to better patient care and consumer protection.

2. Why change the current veterinary technician title to Registered Veterinary Nurse?

For credentialed veterinary technicians and veterinary technician specialists looking to advance their careers, the unified title will create a national and global standard. NAVTA aims to create alignment within the veterinary field, provide education for veterinarians, paraprofessionals and consumers, and elevate the understanding of roles and responsibilities for patient care by veterinary nurses.

NAVTA will work hand in hand with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB), professional veterinary organizations and legislators to create common terminology, practice acts, policies and procedures to ease the burden that could be placed on individual states and associations in credential governance.

Veterinary technicians (once known as animal technicians and then animal health technicians) have seen the profession go through many changes over the course of 50 years. Currently, veterinary technicians throughout the United States have varying credentialing requirements, titles and scope of practice with little perceived value-related clarity of their roles in the eyes of the consumer. A single, unified title and a standardized credential throughout the nation is the next step to improve the level of patient care, align public perceptions of the veterinary nurse, and bring clarity to the field of veterinary medicine.

3. How will changing the title of veterinary technician impact credentialing standards?

Our goal is to reduce and remove the confusion associated with the designations for a veterinary technician. Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT), Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT), Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) and Licensed Veterinary Medical Technician (LVMT) describe credentials held by veterinary technicians throughout the nation. Once a single designation is established, then each state will begin to align with a standardized credential for the profession. The alignment will open avenues for better reciprocity, or the ability for credentialed technicians to work as credentialed technicians outside of the state where they were originally credentialed, across the nation.

4. How will a title change to Registered Veterinary Nurse help the profession and long-term career development?

Registered Veterinary Nurses will have obtained education and a license allowing the practice to have a higher standard of care, and will provide greater patient advocacy and consumer protection. The familiarity of the term will bring greater understanding and provide a clearer expectation of the role played by the profession in veterinary medicine. Increased awareness and respect of RVNs will create a greater demand for credentialed individuals to be involved in the care of pets. The elevated recognition of the profession's role will ultimately result in higher wages, decreased burnout and reduced turnover.

5. Why was the title of Veterinary Nurse proposed?

The term “technician” implies an individual has mastered the science and technology involved with the profession. The term “veterinary nurse” will incorporate the art of caring for our animal patients from a whole picture perspective in addition to the science and technology.

Globally, the people who serve the role of veterinary technicians are more commonly called veterinary nurses, as their status as medical professionals is solidified and supported by their government.

In addition, standardization with a title easily recognizable to the public aids in public awareness of our role. In human medicine, the term “nurse” is widely recognized to describe a group of medical professionals working in collaboration with physicians to treat a patient. The term “veterinary nurse” will in turn have similar association in the public’s eyes.

The credentials of Certified Veterinary Nurse (CVN) and Licensed Veterinary Nurse (LVN) were explored as options; however, credentials using the acronyms of CVN and LVN already exist in human medicine in some states, causing a conflict.

6. Why include the title of nurse?

A proposed title change to Registered Veterinary Nurse is different from nurse. The scope of practice of Registered Veterinary Nurses is expected to be the same as it is currently for Credentialed Veterinary Technicians.

The veterinary technician community has fought long and hard for the current level of recognition, and the human nursing community has fought long and hard for their recognition. A veterinary nurse must clearly represent themselves as a *veterinary* nurse, and a human nurse must clearly represent themselves as a nurse.

Human medicine is organized differently than veterinary medicine, in which there are different types of recognized positions: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Registered Nurse (RN), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and Nurse Practitioner (NP) are several examples.

The responsibilities and job tasks of a veterinary technician have evolved over time, and are inaccurately described by the term “technician”. As stated above, the term “technician” implies that the individual has mastered the science and technology involved with the profession. The term “veterinary nurse” will incorporate the art of caring for patients from a whole picture perspective in addition to the science and technology.

Creating organized, recognized positions in veterinary medicine as human healthcare has done is a possibility as this change continues to evolve.

7. Is the medical scope of responsibilities the same for both nurses and veterinary technicians?

The duties of these two professions are quite similar, while practicing with different species. The education and training is also similar when looking at the AVMA-accredited Veterinary Technology program protocols and RN programs. In addition, the human nursing profession has evolved over the years with nurses today having specific duties or specializations. The veterinary nursing profession is evolving in a similar fashion, and our goal is to follow the human nursing field in regards to title protection, skilled labor and standardized requirements.

Human nurses have a variety of roles in human medicine, including (but not limited to) hospice care, radiology, surgery, anesthesia, emergency and critical care, internal medicine, cardiology, and general practice. Credentialed veterinary technicians also play a significant role in all of these areas. While these human nursing roles (and specializations) are often found in separate clinical practice settings, veterinary nursing counterparts are often found within the same clinical practice setting. As veterinary technician specialties develop further, the veterinary field is likely to see similar depth of specialization in the future.

8. How do human nurses feel about veterinary technicians using the term “nurse”?

Each profession has a distinct scope of practice, and both parties should accurately represent themselves in their occupation. We are confident that the equivalence in education programs for AS and BS degrees will alleviate potential concerns. Nurses have high standards in education and their role in practice which veterinary technicians take seriously.

NAVTA will work collaboratively with Registered Nurses and related professional organizations to gain perspectives from each other and to align on a common goal of setting high standards for those providing nursing care for our family members.

9. Will current veterinary technician credentials be made invalid by this recommended change?

The aim of the movement is to allow current credentialed veterinary technicians to practice under the new title. Some states may offer a grace period to allow for technicians to comply with each state’s revised credentialing requirements.

10. Will this affect the amount of formal education an individual must achieve to become a veterinary technician/nurse?

While we cannot be certain of the answer to this question at this time, the new title will build from the current system and should not directly affect the amount of education required to qualify for examination or credentialing.

11. How will recipients of associate’s and bachelor’s degrees be distinguished?

The initial plan is to distinguish the two through proper credential designation, much like the human nursing field designates RN, BSN and MSN to differentiate degrees. For veterinary nurses, the proposed credential is RVN, with future degrees established with designation of BSVN and MSVN.

12. How are veterinary technicians throughout the U.S. embracing the idea?

The feedback NAVTA has received is largely positive. As this is a significant change for the profession, we have received a great deal of thoughtful and constructive feedback, all of which is helping us as we move forward. If you would like to share your thoughts, please email us at us at vetnurse@navta.net.

13. What effect will a non-credentialed individual using the new title have on the efforts?

One of the initiative’s goals is to implement title protection, allowing only qualified individuals to carry the credential. By creating title protection and implementing educational standards nationwide, the title use by non-credentialed team members will drop significantly.

At the same time, experienced, non-credentialed veterinary support staff are a critical part of the veterinary team, and should be recognized for their knowledge and contribution. Creating recognized positions as human nursing has done is a possibility as this change continues to evolve. Exact details of how this will be carried out will be determined and refined through the process.

14. How will NAVTA help with public and professional awareness of a title change?

NAVTA is discussing the issue with various interested parties professionally with diplomacy to voice the opinions of the NAVTA members. Public relations efforts will also be made to share accurate messaging to the profession.

15. How long will it take for the title change to be implemented?

The process could take years of hard, patient and professional work. Support at the national and local level from each individual in the profession is important in adding to the momentum of change.

16. Which states have been selected for the initial legislative efforts?

The Coalition is currently defining the legislative strategy and is targeting 2018 for the initial legislation reform efforts to begin.

17. What does it mean for a veterinary technician, veterinary technologist or veterinary technician specialist to change credentials?

While exact details will be determined as we move further into the process, veterinary technicians and veterinary technologists should be considered to have the qualifications necessary to be designated as veterinary nurses. Changing the credentials for veterinary technician specialists is also under consideration.

18. In my state, we are privately credentialed with high standards for maintenance of credentialing. How will this be affected?

One of the goals is to establish a nationwide standard of credentialing requirements, both in obtaining and maintenance. The standards set should be appropriate for veterinary nurses across the nation. You are encouraged to contact us at vetnurse@navta.net and your state association and let your voice be heard regarding these standards.

19. What about states that do not require credentialing?

For those states without credentialing of veterinary technicians, now may be the time to reach out to Veterinary Nurse Initiative for support and insight. This year, NAVTA is updating its Model Practice Act and speaking with various leaders in the community regarding credentialing. The topic of credentialing has received increased attention in 2016 through the initiative and will continue to be addressed. The states without credentialing may want to step into the conversation at the national level.

20. What do veterinarians think about the change of title?

Surveys show favorable support for the title change and standardized credential.

21. Who is leading the Veterinary Nurse Initiative coalition?

The Veterinary Nurse Initiative coalition is led by NAVTA. The process started with the *National Credential Task Force* comprised of the following individuals to investigate the current status of credentialing:

- Heather Prendergast, BS, RVT, CVPM, SPHR - New Mexico (Co-chair)
- Kenichiro Yagi, MS, RVT, VTS (ECC, SAIM) - California (Co-chair)
- Carrie Jo Anderson, MS, CVT - Florida
- Haven Bade, LVT, VTS (ECC, Anesthesia and Analgesia) - New York
- Ed Carlson, CVT, VTS (Nutrition) - Massachusetts
- Tricia Gorham, MA, CVT - Florida
- Frances Hyde, BAS, CVT - Florida
- Pat Lynch - Florida
- Janet McConnell, CVT - New Jersey
- JoAnn Nocito, BA, BSN, CVT, RN - Colorado
- Katharine Terry, RN, RVT - California (Advisory)

The *Veterinary Nurse Initiative workgroup* has also been formed to advance the legislative amendments and educate key stakeholders:

- Ed Carlson, CVT, VTS (Nutrition) - Massachusetts
- Mary Berg, BS, LATG, RVT, VTS (Dentistry) - Kansas
- Kara Burns, MS, MEd, LVT, VTS (Nutrition) - Kansas
- Mark Cushing, JD - Washington, D.C.
- Catherine Haskins - Illinois
- Frances Hyde, BAS, CVT - Florida
- Julie Legred, CVT - Minnesota
- JoAnn Nocito, BA, BSN, CVT, RN - Colorado
- Heather Prendergast, BS, RVT, CVPM, SPHR - New Mexico
- Kenichiro Yagi, MS, RVT, VTS (ECC, SAIM) - California

Questions, comments, concerns? We want to hear from you! Please email: vetnurse@navta.net.