

Applying to Veterinary Medicine Schools

Typically, students in Alberta will apply to either the [Western College of Veterinary Medicine \(WCVM\)](#) at the University of Saskatchewan, which is also open to residents of other western provinces, or to the [University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine \(UCVM\)](#) which only accepts Alberta residents. Since UCVM receives up to 200 applications for the 30-32 spaces and WCVM receives approximately 150 applications for the 20 spaces allocated to Alberta residents, completion of the pre-veterinary requirements is not a guarantee that you'll be admitted to veterinary school.

At both western Canadian schools, applicants are expected to have completed at least two years of university studies, but historically, only about 1 in 6 students is accepted after only 2 years of study. Most years, over two thirds have completed four or more years of university before acceptance to a veterinary program.

Your admission to WCVM or UCVM is based on a number of factors that are assessed by your academic record, application, references and the interview process:

- Mental aptitude
- Reasoning capacity, verbal facility, and ability to communicate
- Academic performance and breadth of interest
- Motivation and industriousness
- Maturity and emotional Stability
- Experience with, and knowledge of animals
- Leadership qualities and Integrity
- Social awareness, ability to get along with others
- Reliability, initiative and practicality
- Understanding and knowledge of the veterinary profession

Although high grades are certainly needed, it is not true that only people with straight A's have a chance to be admitted. In the recent past, the mean grade point average of those admitted to WCVM from Alberta was about 3.5, and at UCVM the GPA for the last 2 full years of study for accepted students is normally between 3.4 and 4.0

The WCVM accepts 20 students from Alberta, 20 from B.C., 20 from Saskatchewan and 15 from Manitoba. Two spaces are reserved for individuals with aboriginal ancestry. Special consideration may be given to residents of the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

The UCVM accepts 30 to 32 students from Alberta each year.

How do you get an edge over the competition?

Although animal handling and veterinary experience are not required for entrance into WCVM or UCVM, they can strengthen your application. People who don't have notable animal and vet experience are rarely successful in being admitted to these veterinary medicine programs.

Animal experience gives you an idea of how much you will enjoy working with animals as a vet and some indication of your suitability and potential for success. The variety of your experience gives you a better idea of the profession as a whole. It also helps you identify personal limitations or health problems such as allergies to animals that can make work in this field difficult.

Significant animal experience could include experience in care and management of animals in a farm setting, boarding kennels, equestrian facility, veterinary clinic, pet store, or animal-research facility. The Edmonton Research Station animal facilities at the University of Alberta South Campus has livestock and poultry facilities that often provide volunteer or work opportunities to undergraduate students seeking experience with dairy cattle, poultry or swine.

As well, the Faculty of ALES offers interview and application preparation workshops for students registered in our Faculty. These workshops, offered once per year, give you an edge over students from other faculties or institutions when you face the interview process for either WCVM or UCVM.

Success through extra-curricular fun

Many of the most successful students are those who are involved in extra-curricular activities such as active membership in student clubs. The U of A Pre-Vet/Animal Health Club is a strong group that will give you the scholastic and emotional support you will need in your quest to fulfill your goals. Learn from the experiences of others to make the most for yourself. The Club also aims to expose students to broader career opportunities related to animals and their health, both within and beyond the veterinary profession.

The Pre-Vet Club organizes a number of annual events. These include trips to both WCVM and UCVM to meet with staff, students and to tour their facilities. The club also organizes opportunities to volunteer with animal organizations or farms, invites speakers from the veterinary profession and has many social activities such as a Welcome BBQ and a buddy system for you to meet fellow students and friends.

Your future as a Veterinarian

As a Veterinarian, you may wish to work as a general practitioner in companion animal, equine or food animal practice, or you may find yourself interested in further training to work in a specialized area such as animal embryo transfer, dermatology, surgery, oncology, pathology, epidemiology or many other specialties. You may also choose a route such as veterinary or medical research, teaching, meat and poultry inspection, food safety.

[Career Profile](#)

Career options for veterinarians include:

- Private Practice:
 - Small/Companion Animal Vet
 - Mixed Practice

- Equine Practice
- Large Animal or Herd Health Veterinary Practice
- Exotic Animal Vet
- Various specializations: ophthalmology, oncology, imaging, surgery, etc.
- Federal or Provincial Governments
 - Animal Health and Disease Surveillance Veterinarian
 - Animal Import and Export Regulation Veterinarian
 - Food Safety Regulation and Inspection Veterinarian
- Research and Teaching
 - Veterinary or Human Biomedical Research at a University
 - Animal Health Technology instruction
 - Pharmaceutical Industry Research and Development or Technical Support
- And many more opportunities...!

Just in Case ... What happens if you don't get into Vet School?

If your application to WCVM or UCVM is not successful initially, many options are still available to you:

- If you are not accepted the first time you apply, take heart! The majority of students are not accepted to vet school after the minimum 2 years of pre-veterinary studies. You can continue as a student at the University of Alberta and work toward completing a degree such as Animal Health or Agriculture.
- You can re-apply to WCVM or UCVM after 3rd and/or 4th year in your UAlberta program. Approximately two-thirds of students admitted to DVM programs have completed a bachelor's degree and some have attained a Masters or PhD,
- Though they may be costly, a number of fully accredited international programs accept Canadian students, and quite a few graduates of programs in the Faculty of ALES have attended these vet schools and successfully entered the veterinary profession.

Animal Health-related Careers without the D.V.M.

Although your goal is to become a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), you should have an alternate plan in case you are unable to gain admission to WCVM or UCVM, which are both highly competitive.

There are a multitude of other careers available for you to work with animals on a daily basis whether or not you are a vet. With a degree in Animal Health or Agriculture, you can directly enter a career working with animals or you can complete a Masters or PhD program that will allow you to specialize in areas like

animal physiology, animal nutrition or animal behaviour. In fact, most successful animal scientists (researchers) are not veterinarians. You are only limited by your imagination.

Other careers that graduates of the B.Sc. in Animal Science or B.Sc. in Animal Health have pursued include

- You can complete a technical program at a polytechnic institute for work as an animal health technologist (Registered Veterinary Technician)
- Federal or Provincial Governments
 - Animal Health and Disease Surveillance Agencies
 - Animal Import and Export Regulation
 - Food Safety Regulation and Inspection
- Pet industry – pet food production quality assurance specialist
- You can apply to enter a human health science program, such as medicine, dentistry, nursing, physical therapy or public health.