

# VetNurse.co.uk Jobs

Maximising your chances of a successful job application.

**On 19th August 2016, [VetNurse.co.uk](http://VetNurse.co.uk) carried out a survey amongst veterinary employers to try and help guide veterinary nurses as to how they can maximise their chances of securing the job they want.**

73 employers took part, describing themselves as being responsible for hiring veterinary nurses in general or referral practice.

At the time of conducting this survey, the UK veterinary jobs market seems characterised by a real shortage of RVNs.

It could be argued that in a seller's market, how a candidate presents is of less importance than whether they have a) a qualification, and b) a pulse.

However, the market will doubtless turn at some stage in the future, and 'presenting well' is a good life skill to develop, regardless.

With that in mind, these are the conclusions of the survey. It's worth pointing out that whilst some of them might seem a bit obvious, it is the order in which things were ranked that is perhaps more instructive.

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## Make contact by e-mail *and* post

When asked how applicants should contact them in order to create the best impression, 58.9% of employers said by e-mail, 28.8% by letter, 8.2% by telephone and 4.1% in person, unannounced.

**We say:** Employers may prefer e-mail, but there's perhaps more of a chance that it'll disappear in their spam folder, or just slip down the inbox. Letters, by contrast, command more of the reader's attention, if for no other reason than they have to open the envelope. So our recommendation is to e-mail *and* put a hard copy in the post.

## Highlight experience

By some margin, veterinary employers said that 'previous experience' is what makes a CV stand out positively, with CV layout, spelling/punctuation and an engaging personal statement all scoring similarly high marks thereafter.

What makes a CV stand out positively for you?	Score
Previous work experience	364
CV layout / presentation (i.e. ease with which you can scan key points)	292
Spelling and punctuation	287
An engaging personal statement	285
References	172
Interests / achievements outside work	133

**We say:** Straightforward if you have experience; just make sure it's presented early on, in a way that makes it easy for the reader to pick out the key facts quickly. And whatever you do, make sure there are no spelling mistakes.

But what if you're relatively inexperienced? In that case, your personal statement really needs to shine.

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There is much good advice online about how to write an engaging personal statement. Our recommendations are:

- Write in the first person. 'I'm a hard worker' sounds so much more personal than 'A hard worker', and that's important in a people profession like this.
- Use the first person sparingly. "I'm this, I'm that and I'm the other" soon becomes wearing, and in any event what the employer really wants to know is what you can do for them. Tell them.
- Don't use clichés or management speak, however much of a 'results-driven, motivated, dynamic team-worker' you might think you are.
- Be concise. You have a limited time to create an impression. Don't try and list all your attributes. Look at the job description and focus on the two or three that best meet the needs of your potential employer.
- Try and quantify any claim you make about yourself.
- If you feel uncomfortable highlighting some personality trait you think you possess (perhaps it smacks of blowing your own trumpet), consider closing your personal statement with a short quote about you from someone else, such as a previous employer. A mini endorsement. Get them to say what a caring, kind and professional character you are. It's more powerful coming from someone else, anyway.

## Show you care!

We asked respondents to rank various candidate attributes by importance. This was a pre-selected list, so does not allow for the fact that there might be other, more important attributes or that the least highly ranked are almost completely unimportant.

Please rank the following attributes in terms of their importance when you are considering a new employee	Score
Nursing / clinical skills and experience	359
Demonstrates empathetic / caring attitude towards patients and clients	347
Likeable, affable, ready smile, sense of humour	337
Good communication skills (both listening and responding)	334
Demonstrates desire to be part of a team	257
Smart or tidy presentation	212
Punctuality	198

**We say:** No surprise that skills and experience topped the list. The important thing here is that if you don't have enough experience, 'demonstrating a caring attitude', and 'being likeable/affable' counts for an awful lot.

Again, the important point is that you need to find ways to convey your caring and likeable nature in your CV, particularly if you're weak on experience.

## Desirable traits

We asked respondents to describe their perfect candidate in up to five adjectives or short sentences. We've used them to produce a 'word cloud' in which the most frequently used adjectives are the biggest (see next page).

The top twenty of 100 adjectives were:

Compassionate / Caring	26
Friendly	22
Team-player	20
Enthusiastic	19
Hard-Working	14
Reliable	10
Empathetic	9
Flexible	9
Competent	8
Keen	6
Experienced	6
Confident	6
Professional	5
Proactive	5
Smart	5
Intelligent	4
Motivated	4
Helpful	4
Adaptable	4

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Compassionate  
Adaptable  
Enthusiastic  
Reliable  
Likeable  
Passionate  
Kind  
Patient  
Personable  
Cheerful  
Hard-working  
Experienced  
Confident  
Proactive  
Intelligent  
Smart  
Motivated  
Flexible  
Professional  
Determined  
Positive  
Team-player  
Friendly  
Caring  
Helpful  
Empathetic  
Keen  
Competent  
Responsible  
Approachable  
Honest  
Communicative  
Knowledgeable  
Dedicated  
Friendly  
Adaptable  
Resilient  
Organized  
Detail-oriented  
Self-motivated  
Team-player  
Collaborative  
Innovative  
Creative  
Analytical  
Strategic

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## Tips from the horse's mouth

We asked employers to share any tips they have for veterinary nurses that want to come and work with them. This is how they replied:

- Arrive clean, tidy, on time and ready for work. Smile and introduce yourself.
- Be as honest as you can and give genuine answers not what you think we want to hear.
- Be confident but friendly.
- Be dedicated and honest.
- Be honest.
- Be prepared to go that extra mile for the animals.
- Desire to give high level of clinical and customer service.
- Do your research about our business, look at our website and ask questions.
- Don't send a generic "Dear Sir/Madam" letter/email.
- Don't try and give the impression that you have more experience than you really do.
- Ensure that essential criteria of the job description are met.
- Show enthusiasm and willingness to fit in.
- Enthusiasm for the job is a must.
- Experience, experience, experience!
- Flexible.
- Its a tough job, try and stay positive.
- Make sure you want to really work there and be sincere and honest.
- Need a sense of humour.
- Research the practice before you attend.
- Send me a letter or CV rather than going through an agency.
- Should explain why they want to work at this particular practice as opposed to any other.
- Show a willingness to keep learning.
- The more experience the better!
- Being smiling, determined.
- Contact us direct rather than through agencies.
- Enthusiasm.
- Flexibility.
- Perseverance.
- Research the business before the interview
- Smile and make eye contact.

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- Get as much experience as a student as possible and be a GREAT communicator. Communication is 90% of the job and if you can't communicate well you are of no use to my team.
- Don't pretend to have more knowledge than you actually have and be honest about things you can't cope with e.g. cleaning up vomit!!
- Complete a covering letter, especially if planning to relocate or do not fit the job description exactly - I have interviewed staff without the relevant experience if they have convinced me with a good CV or letter.
- Apply to adverts or send CV on spec rather than going to an agency - it shows initiative and agency fees will detract from your salary.
- Take the time to personalise the email or the method of communication. Listen to what they say is important and what they focus on and have some real life examples of how you can help them with this.
- Must be willing (& genuinely keen) to undertake all aspects of nursing, not just want to hide in theatre/kennels.
- Applicants should have enthusiasm. They should not carry resentments from previous employment into a new work place. They should endeavour to be flexible when adopting protocols in a new position. They should not expect to change everything in a practice on arrival. Established procedures should be discussed and altered with all team members on board.
- Never start the interview telling me they won't work for any less than X amount of money. And never not turn up for an interview that has been scheduled and not contact me. Be passionate about your profession-this is not just a job!
- Be ready to get along in a team situation (with a smile!). Be prepared to do nursing at any level (ie, cleaning kennels and kits/ reception/ anaesthesia and prep).
- Have done your research on our practice and write a fabulous covering statement that is personal to my practice. Also try and get your personality across - we are looking for team fit as much as anything.