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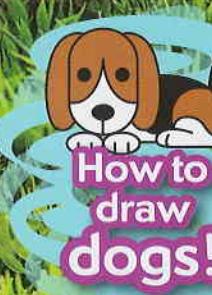


What you need to know about pets in summer





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What it's like to be a **veterinarian**

These animal doctors keep pets healthy and happy!

How cool would it be to be a vet when you grow up? You'd get to be around cute animals all day long and help keep them safe and healthy. But what is it *really* like to be a vet? *Animal Tales* tells you all about it!

Vets are basically doctors for animals, so they help pets get better when they are sick. They also see their animal patients for regular check-ups to help keep them healthy. Just like when you go to the doctor, veterinarians listen to their patient's heartbeat and

look in his eyes, ears and throat. Vets also make sure that the animal's coat is bright and shiny, that there are no weird bumps or lumps on its body, and that it can walk and run without limping. Because animals don't talk, vets have a harder job figuring out if something is wrong!

So what is a day in a veterinarian's office like? "Typically days can be hectic!" says Dr. Carol Osborne, veterinarian at the Chagrin Falls Veterinary Center in Ohio and author

of *Naturally Healthy Dogs* and *Naturally Healthy Cats*. "I see a variety of dogs and cats with all different aches and pains and illnesses." Sometimes she also needs to do surgery on animals, or help a new litter of puppies or kittens to be born.

In order to be a veterinarian, you need to be an animal lover—but that's not always enough. "Being a veterinarian isn't exactly what we think it is, all smiles and petting and playing with fun, beautiful animals," Dr.

Osborne explains. "Animals coming to the vet are often scared and don't feel well. It's a lot of hard work, so you have to be on your toes and have plenty of energy. And first and foremost, you can't be afraid of animals."

A good way to figure out if you'd really like to be a vet is to be around one, Dr. Osborne suggests. Ask your local vet's office if you can observe them work or even help out in their office. You can also volunteer at an animal shelter or join your local 4-H club to gain experience taking care of animals.

But being a vet doesn't always mean working in a clinic treating dogs and cats. Although that's a very common way of practicing veterinary medicine, there are many others you may not have thought of! As a large animal vet, you could work on horse farms or cattle ranches. Exotic animal vets work in zoos—can you

imagine having a tiger or lion as your patient? You could also do research to find new animal medicines, teach at a university or get involved in wildlife conservation. You could even work for the government as part of the United States Department of Agriculture. "There are so many choices!" Dr. Osborne says. "You have lots of options and you can change the area you want to focus on

as you get older, so you don't have to do the same job your whole life."

According to Dr. Osborne, the best thing about being a vet is helping animals live long and happy lives. "I like to make pets feel better," she says. "It's a great feeling of satisfaction to restore health to a pet that's been ill and to restore the joy and the love that's shared between that pet and his or her owner!" 

How to become a vet!

- **Volunteer** at a local animal shelter or a veterinary clinic to see if the job is right for you.
- **Study** biology, math, chemistry and physics in school and college. Some colleges also offer a major in veterinary medicine, although that's not a requirement for post-graduate veterinary school.
- **After college**, enroll in a four-year veterinary program.
- **Midway through vet school**, decide which type of animals to focus on: large animals like horses, small animals like dogs and cats, or even exotic animals if you want to work in a zoo.
- **After vet school and passing a licensing exam**, you can start practicing right away or do an internship that will help you prepare for more education in a veterinary specialty, like surgery or internal medicine.

