

Dream Jobs: Veterinary technician

By Martin Argles, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.25.16

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TOP: A veterinary tech student from Austin Community College in Texas helps a dog. Austin Community College/Flickr.

It's not often you see dogs that are excited to visit the vet. But at the Norwood Road Veterinary Clinic in south London, England, they are straining at the leash to get in the door.

I blame it on bribery. The vet technicians at the office spend a lot of time and dog biscuits getting the animals to like them. This is a very positive thing to do, in one case probably saving the life of a dog who had gotten off his leash. He was wandering along the road, but stopped dead outside the office after spotting Ana Sedecaru in the doorway. She is one of two full-time vet techs.

Dogs And Cats Get Special Attention

It's not just dogs that Sedecaru has this effect on. One Siamese cat that had been vomiting wraps herself around Sedecaru's neck and purrs loudly. The vet, who is trying to listen to her lungs and heart through a stethoscope, can't hear anything but a deep rumble.

Sedecaru trained as a veterinarian in her home country of Romania. But since moving to Britain two years ago, she's worked as a vet tech. The job allows her to improve her English and develop confidence in dealing with the animals' owners.

Getting along with owners is a major part of being a vet tech. Owners want their pets to get the best, most loving and appropriate care possible. The surest way for them to feel this is happening is if they are getting exactly the same attention themselves.

Multitasking On The Job

When I arrive at 8:30 a.m., Sedecaru is already on the phone chatting with one customer about her pet's digestive problems. She is talking to a second about vaccinations, neutering and chipping (putting a microchip under the pet's skin so it can be identified with a scanner if it gets lost). she is very calm and reassuring - virtually smiling with her voice.

The first visitor of the day arrives – a labradoodle that suffered an injury in the park while playing and now needs his stitches out. Sedecaru gives all her attention to the dog. She talks to him and offers him dog treats. The dog melts with appreciation, and so does the owner.

Sedecaru is able to do everything a qualified vet tech could. She is happy to remove stitches, give shots, and interpret an animal's records when talking to the owner.

Caring For A Siamese Cat

The Siamese cat is slightly dehydrated, so Sedecaru grabs a bag of saline. She crouches on the floor with the cat firmly wrapped in a towel beneath her and inserts an intravenous line under its shoulder skin. She rubs the cat's back to distribute the liquid. The cat purrs some more.

At the same time the phone rings. The vet is talking a pet owner, so Sedecaru answers the phone while massaging the cat. Other pets are beginning to line up in the waiting room.

Although Sedecaru and head vet Ellie Richardson say this is reasonably quiet for a Monday, they both seem incredibly busy. The past two hours have sped by. If this is quiet, goodness knows what it's like when they consider it busy.

Treating Dog With Hurt Paw

One of the next patients is Smudge, a King Charles spaniel. He is suffering from a suspected splinter in his front paw. Although he has already had antibiotics, there is still swelling. When the vet squeezes it, pus spurts out. The dog is unable to sit still for the examination, so he will have surgery to see what is going on.

During the operation, the vet searches the wound for dirt or other foreign material. Nothing unusual is found. Sedecaru hands the vet her instruments and removes dirty swabs, checking the dog's responses, heart and breathing every five minutes.

This is definitely not a job for the faint-hearted. You cannot be squeamish or too emotional and you have to have good people skills. But most of all, you really have to care enough about animals to want to make a difference to their well-being. As Richardson points out, just because you love animals, it doesn't mean you are cut out for dealing with them when they are sick.

Job Stats

Pay: From £15,000 to £25,000 (\$18,000 to \$31,000) a year depending on abilities and experience.

Hours: Sedecaru either works from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., or from 12:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., plus alternate Saturday mornings.

Work-life balance: Sedecaru will never have the chance to get fat as she is on the move constantly, and lifting heavy pets and bags of animal food provide natural weight training.

Best thing: Surgery, watching consultations and patient care. "It's nice to see that their treatment works and that they are going home happy."

Worst thing: "Having to put animals down, even though you know it is the best thing for them."

Overtime

Sedecaru's favorite animals are cats. At the age of 8 she kept a kitten in the family apartment for a week before her parents discovered it. She gave her 16-year-old cat called Trompi (Trumpet in Romanian) to her father to look after, but she has since adopted another in Britain. Sedecaru's husband is also a fully trained vet, but he is working as a builder in the United Kingdom. Her favorite meal is not British, but Sarmale, a traditional Romanian dish of minced pork and vegetables wrapped in vine leaves.

Quiz

- 1 What is the main idea of the "Multitasking On The Job" section of the article?
- (A) Sedecaru can only do most procedures if the vet is supervising her.
 - (B) Sedecaru is responsible for chipping dogs that visit the clinic in case they get lost.
 - (C) Sedecaru is in charge of greeting new pets in the waiting room and answering the phone.
 - (D) Sedecaru has to be able to treat many concerns at the same time in order to keep up with the busy pace of the clinic.
- 2 Which paragraph from the section "Treating Dog With Hurt Paw" BEST supports the main idea that working in the veterinary field takes a special kind of person?

- 3 Read the first paragraph of the article.

It's not often you see dogs that are excited to visit the vet. But at the Norwood Road Veterinary Clinic in south London, England, they are straining at the leash to get in the door.

Which phrase from the paragraph gives a clue to the meaning of the word "straining" as it is used above?

- (A) It's not often you see
 - (B) that are excited
 - (C) to visit the vet
 - (D) at the leash
- 4 Read the sentence from the "Caring For A Siamese Cat" section of the article.

She crouches on the floor with the cat firmly wrapped in a towel beneath her and inserts an intravenous line under its shoulder skin.

Which word could replace the word "crouches" in the sentence and still keep the same meaning?

- (A) lays
- (B) sits
- (C) jumps
- (D) squats