

## Trends in first-year employment and salaries of US veterinary medical college graduates, 1984-1990

The distribution of US veterinary medical college graduates has been reported annually since 1980.<sup>1</sup> From 1983 to 1990, employment categories used in the annual AVMA veterinary medical college graduate survey were unchanged, permitting analysis of the trend in first-year employment. This analysis focused on the graduating classes of 1984, 1986, 1988, and 1990.<sup>2-5</sup>

Results in Table 1 show that the percentage of veterinary medical college graduates taking first-year positions as private clinical practice employees ranged from 77.3% in 1984 to 80.6% in 1990. Probably the most interesting trend in these data is the increase in the percentage of graduates taking positions in small animal exclusive practice, from 33.1% in 1984 to 40.0% in 1990. Over the same period, equine and mixed animal practice showed declines in the percentages of graduates taking positions in their first year of employment.

Mean starting salaries for first-year private clinical practice employees, also reported annually, are summarized for the years 1984, 1986, 1988, and 1990 (Table 2). The mean starting salary increased from \$20,237 in 1984 to \$26,499 in 1990, an increase of 30.9%. This represents a compounded annual increase of 4.6%. Over the two-year period from 1988 to

Table 1—First-year employment of US veterinary medical college graduates, 1984-1990

	1984	1986	1988	1990
Large animal exclusive	2.3	1.0	1.9	2.1
Large animal predominant	10.8	8.1	8.4	10.4
Mixed animal	15.0	15.5	14.5	12.4
Small animal predominant	11.9	11.7	9.3	12.4
Small animal exclusive	33.1	36.1	37.7	40.0
Equine predominant	4.2	5.4	3.0	3.3
Total private practice employee	77.3	77.8	74.8	80.6
Public or institutional practice	2.8	3.2	4.3	1.9
Advanced study	12.5	13.2	15.1	14.0
Other employment	7.4	5.8	5.8	3.5
Total other than private practice	22.7	22.2	25.2	19.4
All graduates	100.0 (n = 997)	100.0 (n = 914)	100.0 (n = 894)	100.0 (n = 832)

Table 2—Real starting salaries of US veterinary medical college graduates employed in private clinical practice, 1984-1990

	1984	1986	1988	1990
Money income (\$)				
Large animal exclusive	20,352	21,900	24,488	28,073
Large animal predominant	20,088	20,731	23,214	27,091
Mixed animal	19,579	20,487	22,279	25,248
Small animal predominant	20,087	21,173	22,598	25,892
Small animal exclusive	20,649	21,620	23,550	26,848
Equine predominant	18,022	21,125	21,269	26,051
All private practice	20,237	21,205	23,079	26,499
Real income (\$)				
Large animal exclusive	19,521	19,900	20,624	21,567
Large animal predominant	19,268	18,837	19,551	20,818
Mixed animal	18,780	18,615	18,764	19,397
Small animal predominant	19,267	19,239	19,033	19,892
Small animal exclusive	19,806	19,645	19,834	20,627
Equine predominant	17,286	19,195	17,913	20,014
All private practice	19,403	19,275	19,455	20,359

1990, the mean starting salary in private clinical practice increased 14.8%.

These data show that graduates' starting salaries have risen considerably in money terms. In real terms, ie, correcting for the increased cost of living, graduates' mean starting salary increased only slightly. The most widely used measure of the change in the cost of living at the

retail level is the consumer price index for all urban consumers. The consumer price index increased 24.8% from 1984 to 1990. This compares with the 30.9% increase in graduates' mean starting salary for private clinical practice positions from 1984 to 1990.

Analysis of graduates' starting salaries in real terms was accomplished by expressing the

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mean salary for each type of private practice for each year (1984, 1986, 1988, and 1990), in 1983 dollars. Table 2 shows mean starting salaries in money terms and real terms (1983 dollars). Results show that, in real terms, graduates' mean private practice starting salary increased 4.9% from 1984 to 1990. Moreover, the increase is largely attributable to the period from 1988 to 1990.

Fringe benefits were compared for the years 1984 and 1990 (Table 3).<sup>6,7</sup> With the exceptions of housing and profit-sharing plans, the percentage of full-time employed graduates receiving fringe benefits increased from 1984 to 1990. The percentage of graduates that received medical/hospital plans

Table 3—Fringe benefits received by US veterinary medical college graduates, 1984-1990

	1984 (n = 815)	1990 (n = 841)
	(%)	(%)
Life insurance	23	27
Medical/hospital plan	54	66
Dental plan	6	9
Pension plan	7	10
Profit sharing plan	15	15
Disability insurance	26	35
Liability insurance	46	64
Association dues	37	51
Continuing education	55	70
Annual vacation leave	74	79
Sick leave	36	46
Housing	6	5

increased from 54 to 66%; disability insurance increased from 26 to 35%; and liability insurance increased from 46 to 64%.

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