

Employment, starting salaries, and educational indebtedness of 1991 graduates of US veterinary medical colleges

In cooperation with US colleges of veterinary medicine, the AVMA conducted an annual survey of the graduating classes of veterinary medicine in the spring of 1991. The primary purpose of the survey was to secure data on veterinary graduates' employment, salaries, and educational indebtedness. Of the 2,096 US graduates, 1,318 responded to the survey, a response rate of 63%.

Employment and income

At the time of the survey, 84% of the responding graduates had received at least 1 employment offer. Of those graduates receiving offers, 37% had received 1 offer, 26% had received 2 offers, and 38% had received 3 or more offers. At the time of the survey, 69% of the graduates had accepted positions for employment or advanced study upon graduation.

Among all graduates who had accepted employment or would begin advanced studies, 75% had accepted positions as employees in private practice (Table 1). Mean starting salaries are reported for 575 graduates who indicated annual starting salaries for full-time employment. For graduates taking positions as private clinical practice employees, the mean starting salary was \$27,829. This represents a 5% increase over the 1991 mean starting salary of

\$26,499 for private practice employees.¹

1991 graduates chose em-

ployment in a variety of sectors of the veterinary medical industry, though the majority chose

Table 1—Types of employment and starting incomes of a large sample of 1991 US veterinary medical college graduates

	Percentage of graduates	Mean starting salary		Mean additional compensation expected in 1st year	
		(\$)	No.	(\$)	No.
Large animal exclusive	2.1	29,943	16	\$3,050	10
Large animal predominant	9.9	28,964	75	\$3,596	41
Mixed animal	13.6	27,326	98	\$3,101	56
Small animal predominant	9.6	27,121	75	\$3,573	51
Small animal exclusive	35.6	28,321	274	\$3,459	156
Equine predominant	4.6	23,743	37	\$4,715	23
Federal government	0.2	31,100	1	...	...
Military service	1.0	34,722	9	\$6,000	2
State/Local government	0.1	...	...	...	...
Industry/commercial	0.3	34,333	3	\$20,000	1
University	1.4	19,375	9	\$3,833	3
Self-employed	1.8	29,166	9	\$2,666	3
Other	2.0	27,600	14	\$5,714	7
Advanced study	17.8	...	...	...	...
	100.0	27,858	620	\$3,607	353

Advanced study category includes 161 graduates (17.8%) who would begin advanced study (graduate degree, internship, or residency program) at a mean stipend of \$17,052. Of the 907 graduates reporting employment, 620 graduates reported their annual starting salary for full-time employment.

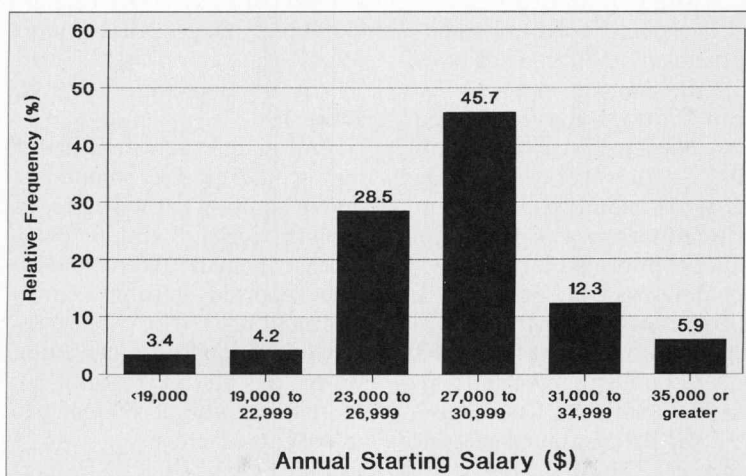


Figure 1—Distribution of 1991 US veterinary medical college graduates entering private clinical practice according to starting salary.

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Table 2—Percentage distribution of 1991 starting salaries of 740 US veterinary medical college graduates, by type of employment

Starting salary (\$)	LAE	LAP	MA	SAP	SAE	EP	U	FG	MS	SLG	IC	AS	SE	Other
35,000 or greater	18.8	6.7	4.1	2.7	6.2	8.1	...	...	33.3	...	66.7	...	11.1	14.3
31,000 to 34,999	12.5	25.3	10.2	8.0	12.4	...	11.1	100.0	44.4	...	...	0.8	11.1	7.1
27,000 to 30,999	56.3	45.3	40.8	45.3	51.5	13.5	...	...	22.2	...	...	1.7	55.6	50.0
23,000 to 26,999	6.3	18.7	36.7	38.7	25.5	37.8	...	...	...	...	33.3	1.7	11.1	14.3
19,000 to 22,999		2.7	7.1	4.0	1.8	18.9	22.2	...	...	...	...	10.8	...	...
<19,000	6.3	1.3	1.0	1.3	2.6	21.6	66.7	...	...	...	...	85.0	11.1	14.3
Number of respondents	16	75	98	75	274	37	9	1	9	...	3	120	9	14

LAE = large animal exclusive; LAP = large animal predominant; MA = mixed animal; SAP = small animal predominant; SAE = small animal exclusive; EP = equine predominant; U = university; FG = federal government; MS = military service; SLG = state/local government; IC = industrial/commercial; AS = advanced study; SE = self-employed.

private practice as in past years (Table 1). Specifically, 35.6% entered small animal exclusive practice at a mean annual salary of \$28,321, up 5.4% from 1990; 9.6% entered small animal predominant practice at a mean annual salary of \$27,121, up 4.7% from 1990. Also, 13.6% entered mixed animal practice at a mean annual salary of \$27,326, up 8.2%. Only 4.6% of graduates entered equine practice, and the mean starting salary was \$23,743, down 8.9%. In the livestock sector, 2.1 and 9.9% of graduates entered large animal exclusive and large animal predominant practice, respectively. In large animal exclusive and large animal predominant practice, mean starting salaries were \$29,943 up 6.7%, and \$28,964, up 6.9%, respectively. An additional 1.8% of the respondents reported they would be self-employed in private practice, with an expected mean salary of \$29,166.

One percent of the responding graduates indicated positions with the military service. The mean starting salary estimated from these survey data was \$34,722. However, the starting salary for military employment for veterinarians who are single, with no prior military service, including base pay, subsistence and quarters allowance, and veterinary special pay was \$30,846. One respondent indicated employment with the federal government at an annual starting salary of \$31,100. This salary suggests that the federally employed new graduate possessed

qualifications or experience consistent with a GS grade 11, step-1 position with an annual salary of \$31,116 in 1991. One survey respondent reported employment with state/local government but did not report full-time annual salary. One responding graduate entering the industry sector reported a starting salary of \$34,333. In the academic sector, 1.4% of the employed respondents chose university positions (research or teaching) at a mean salary of \$19,375. Nearly 18% of graduates would begin advanced study programs (graduate degree, internship, or residency program) at a mean annual stipend of \$17,052.

The distribution of 575 graduates entering private clinical practice who reported salaries for full-time employment shows that 46% will earn between \$27,000 and \$30,999 in their first year of employment (Table 2). Approximately 18%, nearly 1 of 5, will earn \$31,000 or greater. The percentage distribution across salary intervals is shown for all employment sectors in Table 3.

All graduates were asked if they would receive compensation in addition to their salary in their first year of employment. At least one half of the graduates who reported starting salaries indicated that they would receive additional compensation within the first year (Table 1). Most likely, the additional pay represents a percentage of gross income, a percentage of emergency fees, a bonus, a salary raise, or other financial compen-

Table 3—Educational debt of 1991 US veterinary medical college graduates*

Debt (\$)	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative frequency (%)
70,000 or greater	3.4	3.4
50,000 to 69,999	11.0	14.4
45,000 to 49,999	6.1	20.5
40,000 to 44,999	10.4	30.9
35,000 to 39,999	9.3	40.2
30,000 to 34,999	10.5	50.7
25,000 to 29,999	8.5	59.2
20,000 to 24,999	7.1	66.3
15,000 to 19,999	5.1	71.4
10,000 to 14,999	4.9	76.3
5,000 to 9,999	2.6	78.9
1 to 4,999	2.4	81.3
0	18.7	100.0

*Total respondents = 1,318. Cumulative frequency percentages represent the percentage of graduates with debt in excess of the corresponding next lowest debt interval; eg, 50.7% of the graduates reported debt of \$30,000 or greater.

sation. Most graduates anticipating additional pay expected amounts ranging from \$3,000 to 5,000.

Educational debt

All graduates were requested to indicate what their total education indebtedness would be upon graduation. For the 1,072 graduates (81%) who indicated having educational debt, the mean debt was \$34,645, up 13.3% from 1990. The relative frequency distribution showed that 71% of 1991 graduates, compared with 65% of 1990 graduates, had educational debt of \$15,000 or greater (Table 4).¹

References

1. Wise JK. Employment, starting salaries, and educational indebtedness of 1990 graduates of US veterinary medical colleges. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1990;197:1381-1382.