

Facts & Figures

Size and organization of private veterinary practices, 2001

- Most veterinary practices, regardless of practice type, are managed by 1 to 2 veterinarians.
- Sole proprietorship is the most common form of business organization for nearly all practice types.

On the basis of economic survey data gathered by the AVMA, statistical analysis was conducted to indicate the distribution of veterinary practices by number of veterinarians in practice. Four practice size classes were defined, according to the number of full-time-equivalent veterinarians (1, 2, 3, or ≥ 4) working in each practice.

For most types of private practice, the 1-veterinarian class included the largest percentage of practices (large animal exclusive, 68.5%; large animal predominant, 47.4%; mixed animal, 32.4%; small animal predominant, 41.6%; equine, 65.6%; other, 57.1%). Small animal exclu-

sive practices included 30.4% in the 1-veterinarian class and had slightly more (34.3%) in the 2-veterinarian class (Table 1). With the exception of small animal predominant and miscellaneous practice types, the 3-veterinarian class included the smallest percentage of practices.

Analysis also focused on the practices' type of business organization, including sole proprietorship, partnership, professional service corporation, subchapter-S corporation, and subchapter-C corporation (Table 2). Sole proprietorship was the most common type of organization, with the distribution ranging from 35.7% for small animal exclusive practice to 80% for miscellaneous practice types. Excluding miscellaneous practice types, partnerships were reported for 6.7% of equine to 18.4% of large animal predominant practices; from 5.5 to 15.6% of practices, depending on their type, were reported as professional service corporations. Subchap-

Table 1—Percentage distribution of various veterinary practice types by number of veterinarians employed

No. of veterinarians*	LAE	LAP	MIX	SAE	SAP	EQU	MISC
1 (1 to 1.5)	68.5	47.4	32.4	30.4	41.6	65.6	57.1
2 (1.6 to 2.5)	10.9	21.1	27.7	34.3	29.2	16.7	14.3
3 (2.5 to 3.5)	8.7	10.5	12.2	19.6	15.0	6.7	21.4
3.6 to ≥ 4	12.0	21.1	27.7	15.7	14.2	11.1	7.1
Total†	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of usable responses	92	76	188	102	113	90	14

*Numbers in parentheses represent the range of full-time equivalents. †Columns may not total 100% because percentages have been rounded.
LAE = Large animal exclusive. LAP = Large animal predominant. MIX = Mixed animal. SAE = Small animal exclusive. SAP = Small animal predominant. EQU = Equine. MISC = Miscellaneous.

Table 2—Percentage distribution of various veterinary practice types by type of organization

Type of organization	LAE	LAP	MIX	SAE	SAP	EQU	MISC
Sole proprietorship	62.6	46.1	40.9	35.7	48.6	55.6	80.0
Partnership	9.9	18.4	15.1	9.2	12.6	6.7	0.0
Professional service corporation	5.5	9.2	15.6	9.2	13.5	5.6	0.0
Subchapter-S corporation	11.0	19.7	23.1	37.8	20.7	22.2	20.0
Subchapter-C corporation	11.0	6.6	5.4	8.2	4.5	10.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of usable responses	91	76	186	98	111	90	10

See Table 1 for key.

Table 3—Percentage distribution of various veterinary practice types by type of facility

Type of facility	LAE	LAP	MIX	SAE	SAP	EQU	MISC
Full service animal hospital	10.1	61.8	89.3	81.8	92.0	15.9	28.6
Outpatient clinic	6.7	11.8	7.5	7.1	5.3	2.3	14.3
Mobile ambulatory unit	56.2	22.4	2.1	0.0	0.9	68.2	7.1
Office without medical facilities	21.3	1.3	0.5	2.0	0.9	6.8	0.0
Emergency clinic	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	7.1
Specialty/referral practice	5.6	2.6	0.5	7.1	0.9	6.8	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of usable responses	89	76	187	99	113	88	14
<i>See Table 1 for key.</i>							

ter-S corporations were reported as 11% of large animal exclusive practices to 37.8% for small animal exclusive practice types. Subchapter-C corporations were reported from 4.5 to 8.2% of small animal practices (small animal exclusive, small animal predominant, and mixed practices) and 6.6 to 11.0% for large animal practices (large animal exclusive, large animal predominant, and equine practices).

Veterinarians managed various types of practices, as indicated by the range of facility types (ie, full-service animal hospital, outpatient clinic, mobile clinic, office only, emergency or critical care services, and specialty/referral practices). Small animal predominant (92.0%), mixed animal (89.3%), and small animal exclusive (81.8%) were most likely to have full-service animal hospitals. More than 60% of large animal predominant practices had a full-service hospital, whereas only 15.9% of equine and 10.1% of large animal exclusive had a full-service hospital (Table 3). Outpatient

clinics ranged from 2.3% for equine practices to 14.3% for miscellaneous practice types. More than 70% of large animal exclusive practices and equine practices used a mobile unit or an office without hospital facilities. Two percent of small animal exclusive practices indicated their practice was an emergency clinic. Specialty/referral practices ranged from 0.5% for mixed animal to 42.9% for miscellaneous practice types.

This article is the fourth of a series of reports summarizing highlights of the AVMA's 2002 Biennial Economic Survey findings. A full report, 2003 Economic Report on Veterinarians & Veterinary Practices, provides this and other data in more detail.

From the AVMA Membership and Field Services Division, J. Karl Wise, PhD, CAE, Director; Allison J. Shepherd, MBA, Research Projects Manager. Statistical analyses and programming assistance provided by Jasper Fanning, Department of Agricultural Economics, College of Agriculture, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan.