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2026

Veterinary Industry Job Outlook

Workforce Trends. Hiring Data. Talent Insights.



10%
Projected Veterinarian Growth
2024–2034, BLS

39,500+
Annual Vet Sector Job Openings
BLS Employment Projections

245
Rural Vet Shortage Areas
USDA, 2026 — Record High

The veterinary sector is one of the fastest-growing occupational clusters in the U.S. economy, driven by a steady rise in pet ownership, expanding treatment capabilities, and growing demand across companion animal, food animal, and specialty practices. Yet the workforce pipeline has struggled to keep pace — creating a persistent and widening talent gap that demands a more strategic approach to recruiting.

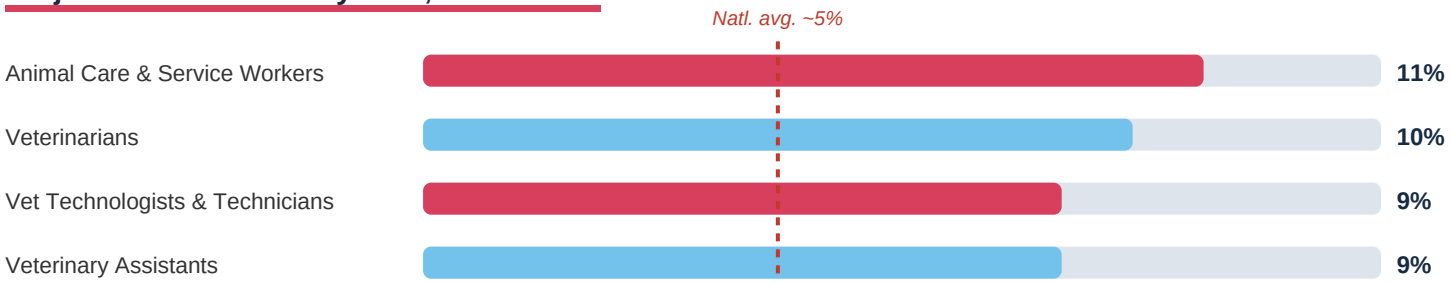
10%
Projected veterinarian employment growth, 2024–2034 (BLS)

39,500+
Annual veterinary sector job openings projected (BLS)

9%
Projected vet tech employment growth, 2024–2034 — much faster than the national average (BLS)

245
Rural vet shortage areas declared by USDA in 2026 — a record high

Projected Job Growth by Role, 2024–2034



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024–34 Employment Projections (all rates: much faster than average)

What's Driving the Demand

- **Pet ownership at record levels.** The number of U.S. households owning pets continues to grow, with dogs present in 53% of households and cats in 39%. More pets translates directly to more demand for veterinary care across preventive, diagnostic, and specialty services.

- **Expanded treatment options.** Advances in veterinary medicine — including oncology, orthopedics, cardiology, and behavioral health — are creating demand for specialized practitioners and driving longer, more complex care relationships between owners and providers.

- **Food safety and public health.** Food animal and public health veterinarians support the USDA's food safety inspection programs, with the USDA designating 245 rural shortage areas in 2026, the highest number ever recorded.

- **Workforce attrition and retirement.** A significant portion of practicing veterinarians are approaching retirement age, and high rates of burnout among credentialed technicians are accelerating departures. Most projected openings reflect replacement demand, compounding the gap.

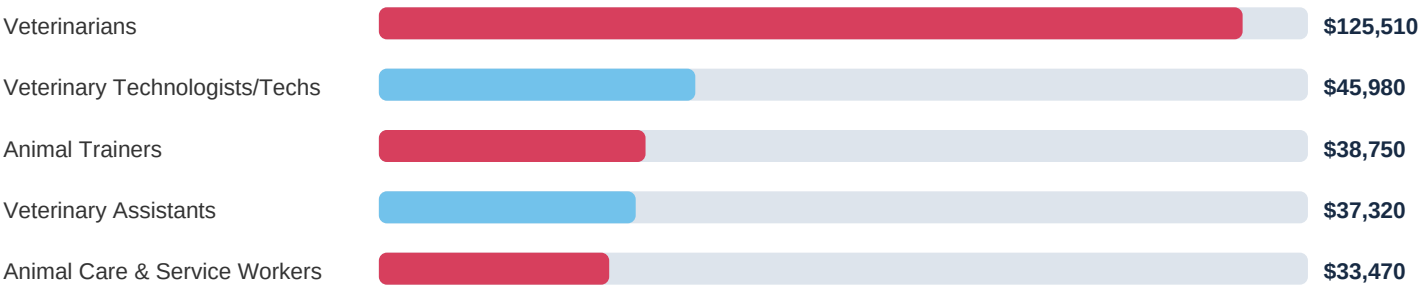
Roles in Demand

Every role in the veterinary care team is projected to grow faster than the national average through 2034. The BLS projects 39,500+ total annual openings across veterinary occupations — spanning clinicians, credentialed technicians, support staff, and animal care workers. The challenge for employers is not identifying where the need is, but finding qualified candidates who are actively engaged in the profession.

Occupation	Growth '24–'34	Median Salary	Why Employers Are Hiring
Veterinarians	**~10%**	$125,510	Highest-paid vet role; 3,000 projected openings/year across all specialties
Vet Technologists & Techs	**~9%**	$45,980	Credentialed techs are the backbone of clinical operations; shortage is critical
Veterinary Assistants	**~9%**	$37,320	22,200 annual openings; high turnover creating persistent, ongoing demand
Animal Care & Svc. Workers	**~11%**	$33,470	Fastest-growing vet sector role; 81,700 annual openings — largest volume
Animal Trainers	**Growing**	$38,750	Expanding demand within companion animal and behavioral health services
Veterinary Practice Managers	**Growing**	Varies	Corporate consolidation driving demand for experienced operations leadership

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2024–34 Employment Projections

Median Annual Salary by Role



Median wages as of May 2024 | BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics

Compensation Reality: The median veterinarian salary of **$125,510** is strong, but new graduates carry an average of more than **$150,000** in educational debt — creating immediate financial pressure that shapes where and how they practice. Employers who address compensation structure, loan repayment support, and career development attract significantly more candidates. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024–34 Projections)

The veterinary talent shortage is structural — not cyclical. Educational pipelines are constrained by limited accredited programs, high debt burdens discourage new entrants, and burnout is driving experienced professionals out of the field. General job boards reach job seekers. Association career centers reach veterinary professionals already committed to their field.



~70%
of HR professionals report difficulty recruiting full-time staff (SHRM, 2026)

245
USDA-designated rural vet shortage areas in 2026 — a record high (USDA)

What Employers Are Up Against

- **A constrained education pipeline.** There are only 33 AVMA-accredited veterinary colleges in the U.S. Graduating approximately 3,000 new DVMs annually, the system cannot rapidly scale to meet accelerating demand — especially as senior practitioners retire.

- **High debt, lower compensation entry points.** New veterinary graduates carry significant educational debt relative to starting salaries. This financial pressure shapes practice-area choices, geography, and willingness to take on lower-paying roles in underserved markets.

- **Burnout and turnover.** Veterinary medicine is emotionally taxing. High caseloads, staff shortages, and difficult client interactions contribute to compassion fatigue. Credentialed technician turnover in some practices runs 30–40% annually, creating a constant recruiting cycle.

- **Rural and geographic shortage.** The USDA designated 245 veterinary shortage areas in 2026 — the highest number on record — predominantly in rural and underserved communities where access to qualified veterinary professionals is most limited.

How Leading Employers Are Responding

Reach Professionals Through Association Networks

Veterinarians and vet technicians maintain strong ties to their professional associations throughout their careers. Association career centers put job opportunities directly in front of credentialed candidates — not general job seekers.

Address Compensation and Career Development

Employers offering loan repayment assistance, structured career paths, and continuing education support are differentiating themselves in a competitive market and improving both recruitment and retention outcomes.

Consolidate and Simplify Job Distribution

With 39,500+ annual openings projected across veterinary occupations, posting and managing multiple job boards is inefficient. A single distribution across relevant veterinary association boards reaches more qualified candidates in less time.

About Careers Network powered by Momentive

Careers Network powered by Momentive is the largest network of association career centers in the world, connecting employers with specialized professionals across more than 60 industries through 3,000+ professional association job boards. For veterinary employers, this means direct access to veterinarians, credentialed technicians, and animal care professionals who are actively engaged in their professional communities — the candidates that general job boards simply cannot reach.

Why Veterinary Employers Choose the Careers Network

- **Post Once, Reach Many**

  One posting distributed across relevant veterinary association boards.

- **Credentialed Audiences**

  Reach DVMs, vet techs, and specialists — not general job seekers.

- **Association Trust**

  Candidates trust career centers tied to their professional associations.

- **Recruitment Experts on Your Side**

  Our team helps optimize campaigns for the veterinary talent market.

- **Centralized Billing**

  One invoice. One partner. One recruitment strategy.

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Ready to Reach Veterinary Professionals?

Talk with a Recruitment Expert today.

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