

Frequently Asked Questions

Animal Science at Ara Institute of Canterbury

Do I need a qualification to work with animals?

For most jobs you do, but even for those that don't require a qualification, having one gives you credibility. It shows that you possess recognised knowledge and skills in the care and management of animals. This is especially important if you're dealing with other people's loved animals.

What's the difference between a veterinary nurse and a veterinary nurse assistant?

Veterinary nurses are the senior of these two roles. They can make independent decisions in the delivery of care to animal patients (in all areas of veterinary clinic practice where direct supervision of a vet isn't required) and they assist vets during surgical procedures. Veterinary nurse assistants play more of a support role. They assist vets and vet nurses, help with things like patient care and diagnostic sampling, and undertake reception and front-of-house duties.

During my course, do I have to find my own work placements?

Yes, you're expected to source your own work placements but Ara staff will assist where possible. Work placements range from local boarding facilities to veterinary clinics around New Zealand. If you study veterinary nursing or the animal technology (veterinary nursing assistant strand), you'll need to gain work experience in a New Zealand veterinary clinic.

Do I get paid anything while I'm on a work placement?

This is up to the provider of the placement and the level of work you're undertaking. Most animal management placement opportunities aren't paid, but some veterinary practices will pay vet nurse and vet nurse assistant students for the hours they work.

What are employment prospects for graduates like?

There is strong demand for veterinary nurses in New Zealand and many Ara students are employed during their training. There is increasing interest from veterinary clinics in veterinary nursing assistants as vet nurses require help to manage and handle their cases. With increasing changes to legislation for animal welfare, owners and operators of any temporary housing facility for companion animals (such as boarding facilities and welfare centres) need to ensure their staff meet certain standards to manage the health and welfare needs of the animals in their care. Our Level 4 animal management qualification is ideal for pursuing a career in these areas.

