Survey

Did you know that the vast majority of veterinary technicians are women? How about that being a NAVTA member means you’ve earned at least $1,500 more each year than other veterinary technicians? These are just a few of the interesting tidbits we learn through the National Demographic Survey from Dec. 23, 2011, to March 2, 2012. Every four years, NAVTA makes it a priority to publish results from the survey. This last time, approximately 2,500 veterinary technicians and assistants took part and there were participants from all 50 states and 26 international residents (primarily from Canada).

About the Survey
The details were gleaned from a self-administered, online 30-minute survey with three groups of veterinary technicians:
- Currently on the NAVTA member list.
- Reported he or she is a NAVTA member, but are not on the member list.
- Reported he or she is not a NAVTA member.

Profile of Respondents
- The majority of respondents, 86 percent, are employed as technicians, and half of them work in suburban settings.
- Among credentialed technicians, their credentials are almost evenly split into thirds across licensed, registered and certified veterinary technicians.
- Three-quarters of techs have associate's degrees (2 percent fewer than 2007), while the number of techs with a bachelor's degree has dropped by two-thirds to 11 percent.
- Fifteen percent are trained on-the-job and 38 percent of technicians work part-time and earn an average wage of $16.80 per hour.

Profile of Respondents

- 86% of respondents are employed as technicians.
- 95% of technicians surveyed are female.
The average veterinary technician is:
- Female (95 percent of those surveyed are female)
- 40 years old

More NAVTA technicians:
- Have bachelor’s and graduate degrees now than in 2007
- Are graduates of an AVMA accredited program
- Are more likely to have a degree than self-stated members or non-members
- Usually make $1,500 more than non-NAVTA members
- Are somewhat more likely to stay in veterinary technology than a non-member
- Are more likely to spend time teaching, even if not a professor or the like
- Have been members of the organization for six years
- Feel that current dues are about right compared to NAVTA programs and services, and 37 percent would be willing to pay higher dues
- Prefer to pay dues online
- Work full-time

On the Job
Technicians have worked an average of 12.8 years in their profession, up from 12.2 years in 2007, and have been with their current employer about 7.2 years, which is down from 8.4 years in the last study. The animal health care team continues to grow with additional 3.2 staff members, which includes practice managers. While salary was a technician’s greatest concern in 2007, the top concern now is the current economic environment, with a likely focus on remaining employed.

40 percent are employed in:
- Companion animal practices

And another 40 percent work in:
- Education
- Diagnostic/research laboratory
- Specialty practices
- Other

40 percent of the average tech’s time goes to:
- Animal nursing
- Client communications
- Teaching
- Anesthesia

36 percent goes to:
- Laboratory
- Radiology
- Staff supervision
- Other

Salary and Benefits
With the median annual income for full-time, year-round female workers in 2009 at $36,278 (compared to men’s $47,127), 24% time spent on:
- Other

38% of technicians work part-time and earn an average wage of $16.80/hr.

On The Job
1 DOG YEAR = Average time with current employer.

VET + = Addition of health care team members.

3/4 of techs have an associate’s degree.

Average Age of Technicians.

40% time spent on:
- Laboratory
- Radiology
- Staff Supervision
- Other

40% time spent on:
- Animal Nursing
- Client Communications
- Teaching
- Anesthesia

24% time spent on:
- Other
Salary & Benefits

$50

Almost 70% of techs say NAVTA dues are just right. While just over 30% feel dues are too expensive.

Aspects of job:

Technicians are earning more than $1,000 less annually than the average American, although technicians’ rise in salaries have consistently outpaced inflation. Benefits from employers have declined on almost all points, except for an increase in dental and life insurance. Although paid vacation, health insurance, free discounted animal care and paid overtime/holidays/sick leave are still the benefits most often provided by employers, they are provided much less frequently than in past years. The same can be said of retirement plans/pensions, continuing education time off and dental insurance, which is provided to slightly more than half of veterinary technicians. In fact, paid time of for CE has dropped to 1995 levels, and paid travel and lodgings are dropping towards 1995 levels as well. The number of technicians whose NAVTA membership is paid by an employer has dropped to 1999 levels.

Almost 70 percent of technicians say $50 annual dues for NAVTA are just right, while just more than 30 percent feel that dues are too expensive.

Concerns:

While most respondents selected “lack of professional recognition” as the most frequently mentioned problem, “other” was chosen most often as the top priority. Among those other issues: lack of resources/pensions, raises, unemployment/lack of jobs-hours, under-managed/understaffed, relationship with boss/management, long hours, politics, and physical demands. Interestingly, 7 percent of those with other issues indicated that there were no problems and that they were lucky to have a job. The “current economic environment” is both the most frequently mentioned issue that will affect veterinary technician jobs in the next five years, and the issue most frequently ranked number one, followed by “employment, salary and benefits.” Almost all technicians agree that “in addition to vets, only vet techs should be allowed to perform certain tasks,” and “veterinary technicians are so underpaid,” while few agree that, “the general public understands what a vet tech is.”

Aspects of job:

“Caring for animals in the best way possible” and “making a difference in a pet’s life” are the most fulfilling aspects of a technician’s profession. Assisting in the diagnosis of and problem solving related to a pet’s condition, and staying current in the science and technology of medicine followed as the next most fulfilling aspects of their jobs. Veterinary technicians are most often responsible for

1/4 of technicians responded “not applicable” to questions involving use of products with their own pets.

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The most frequently mentioned types of mobile applications:
- Calculators (dosing, caloric, fluids, due date, CRI – DVMCalc, DVMax)
- Scheduling
- VetPDA/Plumb Formulary
- Toxicity tables/Choc Tox
- MON Apps for viewing and sharing radiography/lab results (iVision, DICOM)
- Breed Risk
- GPS/navigation
- Patient records apps/CRM

About a one-third of vet techs working in a clinical setting are strongly/very strongly encouraged to communicate with clients via e-mail or the clinic web page. Two-thirds of clinics have a page and the majority of those who advertise through Facebook. While 11 percent of clinics have a page, three-fourths of those who do, advertise through Twitter. Desktops or laptop, the most frequently used technology, are used particularly for internet searches, earning CE credits and checking e-mail, while mobile phones are most frequently used for text messaging and phone calls.

Member benefits:
Continuing education articles, The NAVTA Journal, career-related articles, case studies, and opportunities to earn CE credit are the NAVTA programs most frequently identified as very/somewhat important services and programs. “More specialized content for experienced technicians” is the most frequently mentioned type of CE article sought, followed by “small animal topics.” Almost half of techs would like The NAVTA Journal to be available in a mobile friendly version (other than current PDF).

References

As a note, The NAVTA Journal is and was available online when this survey was taken. Since then, the communications staff have strived to make sure members know it is available for them to view digitally, but the vast majority of members read the hard-copy version exclusively.

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