

Find the Right Veterinarian for Your Spay/Neuter Clinic



Overcoming old perceptions, crafting great job ads, seeing beyond the resume to the unique individual—all these are crucial components to success. This resource from ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance can help you through the process.

Table of Contents



Chapter 1: See Through the Veterinarian's Lens	3
Chapter 2: Establish the Rewards	6
Chapter 3: Craft a Winning Job Description	9
Chapter 4: Two Sample Job Descriptions	13
Chapter 5: Interview with Intention	20

Portions of this booklet were written by James R. Weedon, DVM, MPH, former Executive Director of the Spay-Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP) Inc. in Houston, TX

Chapter 1: See Through the Veterinarian's Lens



If you're struggling to find the right veterinarian for your spay/neuter clinic, you're not alone.

Many veterinarians don't consider spay/neuter programs to be as exciting or prestigious as private practice or specialization in a specific area of interest. And as a nonprofit often targeting those who cannot afford full veterinary fees, clinics must raise the money for salaries and equipment while fee income is modest or nonexistent.

It helps to start your search by looking at the situation from the veterinarian's point of view. There are perceptions about s/n medicine that you'll want to be mindful about when creating your job description and recruitment messages.

Quality of Care

Some job candidates may believe that the only way your clinic can perform so many surgeries and charge such low fees is by cutting corners. You cannot stress enough the fact that higher volume and lower prices are never achieved at the expense of quality.

High Numbers

Some veterinarians are intimidated by the number of surgeries done on a daily basis at high quality, high volume spay/neuter clinics. You'll need to be clear about your expectations while assuring prospects that surgical speed will come with training and practice. Providing an opportunity to observe a good team in action will let your prospects see what can be achieved with the right support and procedures in place.



Practice Limitations

Veterinarians considering full-time spay/neuter work may think they will be perceived as unable to function in a clinical practice situation. You can overcome that concern by offering continuing education and encouraging involvement in local veterinary associations. Creating a mentorship with a less experienced veterinarian will add another dimension to the job and allow your veterinarian to have an influence that goes beyond day-to-day surgeries.

As a field, we have to make it clear that our veterinarians are still examining animals, diagnosing diseases and conditions, monitoring patients and improving lives.

Professional Reputation

You've probably heard comments like these: "By doing lower cost spay/neuter surgeries, you are demeaning veterinary medicine or cheapening the value of such surgeries" or "Veterinarians who do these jobs can't make it in real practice." While such comments are unfair and untrue, they cause some to worry about future employment opportunities.

Again, it is important to stay involved with organized veterinary medicine so the profession recognizes that price does not determine quality and that our veterinarians are current and competent. We must help everyone understand that proper set-up, efficiencies and volume of procedures make the economies much different from those in a typical practice.



Unfair Competition

Some veterinarians argue that our clinics take business from private practices. You'll want to stress the fact that we provide a one-time service for clients who would most likely never have their animals altered in a private clinic. You can also make it clear that part of your service is educating clients and encouraging them to take their animals to private veterinary clinics for routine care.

Chapter 2: Establish the Rewards



While many veterinarians want to help homeless animals and end pet overpopulation, the reality is that your recruiting message must do more than tug at the heartstrings or play to the conscience.

You have to remember that while you may be driven by mission, you are essentially running a business. You are hiring employees who are looking for the same kind of job satisfaction that any employee seeks. If you want to attract veterinarians to spay/neuter, you'll need to show them that they will be fairly compensated (salary and benefits), treated professionally and given the ability to have a real impact.

Salaries

To be competitive in recruiting veterinarians, you must know the going rate in your area and offer competitive salaries and benefits. If you're recruiting out of the area, you might want to consider a signing or relocation bonus. This can be a compelling enticement for a young veterinarian with large education debt.

Benefits

Competitive benefits would include:

- Insurance (medical, life, disability)
- Reimbursement for state license, DEA, professional liability insurance, etc.
- Dues for veterinary associations and/or organizations
- PTO (paid time off) for holiday, personal, sick leave
- Continuing education allowance
- Retirement plan such as 401k

It is important that all employees understand the benefit package and its value to them. Benefits are a tax-advantaged way to compensate employees.

Professional Employer Organizations



It can be difficult for a small nonprofit organization to offer the kind of benefits that a large private clinic can provide. One solution might be to use a professional employer organization (PEO), which works by becoming the legal employer of your staff for purposes of payroll, benefits and human resources.

By aggregating the employees of many businesses, a PEO can offer better rates on health and workers' compensation insurance, while giving employees

greater benefits. For the business owner, PEOs take on the headache of payroll taxes, regulatory compliance and a gamut of HR issues, from hiring to drafting an employee handbook to mediating conflicts.

The National Association of Professional Employers Organizations, www.napeo.org, offers a directory of its members and guidance on what to consider when choosing one. Typically PEOs require a one-time startup fee and then an ongoing percentage of payroll, which can fluctuate depending on the services and the average worker salary.

Schedule and Lifestyle

One way to create positions with wider appeal and avoid the cost of benefits is to hire part-time veterinarians. Part-time employees who work less than 30 hours per week typically do not receive benefits. Employees working more than 30 hours but less than 40 hours generally receive a percentage of the benefits.

In addition to veterinarians who want part-time employment, you might be able to hire surgeons from private practices to work for you one or two days a week. Another option might be veterinarians who want to supplement their income by working for you on their days off.

Part-time veterinarians may be paid by the hour, by the surgery or by the shift.



Chapter 3: Craft a Winning Job Description



Creating a written job description will help you define your needs and expectations. The resulting document will become an important part of the interview process, giving both you and the prospect specifics to discuss and reducing the possibility of misunderstandings down the line. There are several things to consider as you develop your job description.

- **Organizational mission:** It is very important to make sure every prospect understands and is aligned with the mission of your clinic.
- **Type of clinic:** The veterinarian's role should be defined in the specific context of the type of clinic you operate.
- **Client profile:** Most veterinarians have experience only with owned animals. If your clinic serves shelter animals, it will be important to make this clear and to provide resources about the unique challenges of dealing with these special populations. [ASPCApro.org](https://www.aspcapro.org) is an excellent place to start.

- **The team:** It is very important to most veterinarians to have a strong support team in place so they can focus on those tasks that require their specialized knowledge and experience without getting bogged down in administrative details or work that should be delegated to technicians or other support staff.
- **Chain of command:** You'll want to be clear about whether the new veterinarian will report to an Executive Director, Director of Operations, Chief of Surgery or Board of Directors. When the veterinarian reports to a superior who is not a veterinarian (as often happens when the clinic operates as part of a humane society) it is very important to clarify the factors that impact clinic decisions, to what extent the veterinarian is in control, and who has the final say. Specific considerations include whether current protocols are guidelines or must be strictly followed; who makes changes to protocols and the procedure for making those changes; who selects, evaluates and disciplines the clinic staff; and the process for selection and purchase of medical equipment and supplies.
- **Scope of services:** Your prospects will want to know whether there are opportunities to provide additional services such as testing, vaccinations and treatment for parasites, as well as any limitations in animals served (cats, dogs, age, size, etc.) dictated by space, equipment or manpower. The organization's euthanasia policy should be clearly stated along with the process for making euthanasia decisions.
- **Essential duties and responsibilities:** This is the heart of the job description. You'll want to list the specific duties and responsibilities that will be assigned to the veterinarian. For example, will the veterinarian be a Chief of Surgery or a staff veterinarian who can gain experience and speed while being mentored by a senior surgeon? Will the veterinarian be expected to handle after-hours emergencies? Will you be operating under the veterinarian's DEA license? If so, what policies and procedures are in place to make sure controlled substances are handled properly?
- **Additional skills:** If the job requires certain language, computer or other skills, be sure to list them.
- **Certificates, licenses, registrations:** In addition to a state veterinary license, list other requirements such as Drug Enforcement Administration registration, malpractice insurance, etc.



- **Work environment:** You'll want to make prospects aware of noise levels, exposure to anesthetic gases and other environmental factors intrinsic to the performance of the job.
- **Physical demands:** You may require that the veterinarian be able to perform such physical tasks as lifting patients, equipment and supplies up to 50 pounds. Be sure to check your state Veterinary Practice Act, and contact the federal DEA and state pharmaceutical board to determine just what rules and regulations must be followed, particularly with regard to controlled substances.

Where to Advertise

It has been our experience that, in most cases, clinics find their veterinarians in their own backyard. Here are some places to consider when looking:

- Place an ad in your state VMA and surrounding states. Most have online and print publications.
- Contact local vet technician programs (where vets may teach) or local ER clinics, as these clinics generally have opposite hours of your clinic and may be able to fill in. Plus, they don't perceive you as "competition" and often veterinarians working there are interested in keeping their surgery skills up and may be interested in fill in work.
- Contact local spay/neuter clinics in surrounding areas and ask if they have any additional vets or leads on fill-in vets.
- Contact local shelters that may employ veterinarians, and ask if they have any additional vets or leads on fill in-veterinarians.
- Place a free ad on the ASPCApro website job locator: <https://aspcapro.org/snjobs>.
- Place an ad on the Animal Sheltering site: <https://www.animalsheltering.org/>.
- Place an ad on the Association of Shelter Veterinarians site: <http://www.sheltervet.org/>.
- Place an ad on <http://www.indeed.com/> and <http://www.getveterinaryjobs.com/>.
- Place an ad in DVM News magazine, Veterinary Economics and Veterinary Medicine. Phone: **800-225-4569**, ext. 2778 or ext. 2629. Placing an ad will also place a listing on their website: <http://veterinarymedicine.dvm360.com/>.



Two ad samples:

1. Have a desire to make a difference in the lives of animals? Want to do so in a way that offers a good work/life balance with no weekends or long hours? ORG NAME in CITY is seeking a veterinarian to join our medical team of two surgeons in providing quality spay/neuter surgeries in a fast-paced environment. Veterinarians report to our Medical Director and are supported by eight RVTs. Be part of a progressive organization working to help homeless pets in 11 counties. Part or full-time. Competitive salary and benefits including CE and health insurance. Contact _____.

2. Tired of private practice, emergencies, working six or seven days a week? Try limited client contact, no emergencies, Monday through Friday only while making a difference in pet overpopulation and helping pets and their people. ORG NAME in CITY might be the place for you. Great support staff and quality medical protocol. Competitive salary and benefits including _____. Contact _____.

Chapter 4:

Two Sample Job Descriptions

Customize these job descriptions from ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance—one for veterinary surgeon and one for medical director—to fit your agency.

1. **Veterinary Surgeon**

Job Title: Veterinarian

Reports To: Medical Director

FLSA Status: Exempt



Job Summary

Responsible for daily care of all surgical patients, ensuring all clinic staff members are adhering to proper pre-, peri- and post-operative care of patients. During designated training sessions, responsible for training participants in all aspects of patient care and efficient/safe clinic practices, maintaining a professional and friendly manner at all times.

Working Relationships

Works closely with other veterinarians, veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants and other staff.

Essential Job Functions

1. Examine animals pre-operatively to determine their ability to withstand surgery.
2. Perform surgical sterilizations.
3. Examine animals post-operatively to ensure appropriate healing.
4. Inoculate animals and provide recommendations for follow-up care.
5. Supervise handling and recording of controlled substances by veterinary technicians.
6. Supervise post-operative rechecks and order of medical treatments as necessary to ensure complete surgical recovery.
7. Access individual patient issues and provide appropriate solutions.
8. Creatively solve problems on a daily basis.
9. Make reasonable and sensible medical decisions.

10. Follow and support all organizational and medical protocols.
11. Communicate effectively with medical director to keep management apprised of all unusual situations.
12. Communicate any issues concerning staff or patients with medical director.
13. Communicate any issues concerning training programs and/or participants to medical director.
14. Provide input and communicate any issues regarding the clinic's disease control protocols, surgical protocols or other medical issues at regular veterinarian meetings or with the medical director as appropriate.
15. At all times behave in a manner that upholds both personal and professional standards as an ambassador of the ASPCA.
16. Train any designated persons in all aspects of patient care and efficient/safe clinic practices, maintaining a professional and friendly manner at all times.
17. Be available to travel and train as requested.
18. Strive to continually improve all training programs.
19. Be a leader among staff, displaying a positive attitude and acting as a motivating force for all staff members.
20. Ensure all clinic staff members are adhering to proper pre-, peri- and post-operative care of patients.
21. All other duties as assigned.

Surgical Techniques & Skills (will train)

1. Adhere to aseptic/sterile techniques while scrubbing, gowning and gloving.
2. Adhere to sterile field throughout the surgical process.
3. Understand ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance theory on incision placement.
4. Perform efficient and concise entrance into abdomen.
5. Perform safe and correct square knots.
6. Perform safe and gentle spay hook technique.
7. Performance of the ovarian cutaway technique in canine patients.
8. Performance of the ovarian pedicle tie in feline patients.
9. Usage of the modified strangle knot, able to set using carmalt.
10. Performance of scrotal neuter techniques in both adult and pediatric patients.
11. Complete efficient, safe and attractive closures, utilizing cruciate sutures.
12. Demonstrate principles of gentle tissue handling.

Other Critical Skills

1. Demonstrate good speed when necessary.
2. Competently perform and teach CPR and other emergency measures.
3. Competently handle surgical complications and rechecks.
4. Effectively critique breaks in sterility.
5. Effectively critique and suggest additional disease control measures.
6. Understand and can explain basic anesthesia.
7. Understand and practice low-stress animal handling.
8. Communicate effectively with clients and colleagues.

Education, Experience, Knowledge, Skills, Abilities

1. Must be a licensed veterinarian in the state of North Carolina.
2. Must maintain all current and correct licensure.
3. Physical requirements
 - Must be able to work standing or sitting for 8 or more hours.
 - Must be able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds repeatedly throughout the day with help.
 - Must be able to bend and kneel repeatedly.
 - Must be able to see fine detail in a variety of situations.
 - Must have good hearing including ability to distinguish changes in pitch.
 - Must have reasonable degree of agility to move through tightly cramped areas in various situations.
 - Must have acceptable sense of touch and smell.
 - Must have good range of motion in joints especially wrist, knees, elbows.
 - Must have good range of motion in back for twisting, etc.
 - Must be able to work in potentially extreme environmental temperatures.
 - Must have acceptable sense of balance.
 - Must be able to work and reach on hands and knees.
 - Must be able to use a ladder and or step stool.
 - Must possess excellent hand-eye coordination.
 - May be asked to move large oxygen tanks.
 - Must possess an acceptable degree of dexterity in hands and fingers.
 - Must have good vision including peripheral vision, fine detail, distance, depth perception and ability to focus.

4. Emotional/mental requirements
 - Must be able to work efficiently and effectively under stressful conditions.
 - Must be able to respond quickly to a variety of medical situations (with training).
 - Must be able to cope with death due to surgical complication or euthanasia.
 - Ability to rapidly and accurately process information.
 - Ability to delegate tasks.
 - Ability to recognize a need for assistance and ask for help.
 - Ability to make decisions.
 - Ability to cope with frustrating situations and remain calm.
5. Potential/prolonged exposures
 - Prolonged exposure to various aqueous solutions including but not limited to dish soap, chlorhexidine and spectra soap.
 - Prolonged exposure to isopropanol, hydrogen peroxide.
 - Potential exposure to formalin solution.
 - Potential/prolonged exposure to isoflurane gas.
 - Prolonged exposure to quaternary ammonium cleaners and bleach.
 - Prolonged exposure to pressurized steam.
 - Potential exposure to sharps, including needles and surgical blades.

Work Environment

The offices and operations of a high volume spay/neuter clinic can be high stress and very busy at times. The schedule can change and may require weekend or evening hours to complete the job. Can include working some holidays, depending on clinic needs. Traveling and training often requires travel on weekend days. Candidate must be flexible with schedule changes on short notice.

2. Medical Director

Job Title: Medical Director
Reports To: Vice President
FLSA Status: Exempt



Job Summary

Responsible for daily care of all surgical patients, ensuring all clinic staff members are adhering to proper pre-, peri- and post-operative care of patients. During training sessions, responsible for training participants in all aspects of patient care and efficient/safe clinic practices, maintaining a professional and friendly manner at all times. Provides oversight of NSNRT and veterinarian training programs and all medical staff.

Working Relationships

Works closely with vice president, training program managers and other staff.

Essential Job Functions

1. Examine animals pre-op to determine their ability to withstand surgery.
2. Perform surgical sterilizations.
3. Examine animals post-op as necessary to ensure appropriate healing.
4. Inoculate animals and provide recommendations for follow-up care.
5. Supervise handling and recording of controlled substances by veterinary technicians.
6. Supervise post-op rechecks and order of medical treatments as necessary to ensure complete surgical recovery.
7. Provide medical oversight of the clinic program, including evaluation of medical, surgical and disease-control protocols.
8. Responsible for implementing complete medical protocol within all facilities.
9. Hire and supervise medical staff, in conjunction with lead veterinary technician, operations manager and executive director.
10. Evaluate and develop medical staff training.
11. Conduct medical staff performance reviews on bi-annual basis.
12. Plan and lead monthly medical staff and veterinarian meetings.
13. Identify staff members appropriate for training programs and supervise their training.
14. Train program participants and any other designated persons in all aspects of patient care and efficient/safe clinic practices, maintaining a professional and friendly manner at all times.

15. Effectively “team lead,” displaying a positive attitude and acting as a motivating force for all staff members.
16. Solicit input and communicate updates regarding the clinic’s disease control protocols, surgical protocols, or other medical issues at regular medical staff and/or veterinarian meetings as appropriate.
17. Ensure all clinic staff members are adhering to proper pre-, peri- and post-operative care of patients.
18. Be available to travel and train as requested.
19. At all times behave in a manner that upholds both personal and professional standards as an ambassador of the ASPCA.
20. Other duties as assigned.

Education, Experience, Knowledge, Skills, Abilities

1. Must be a licensed veterinarian in the state of North Carolina.
2. Must maintain all current and correct licensure.
3. Physical requirements
 - Must be able to work standing or sitting for 8 or more hours.
 - Must be able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds repeatedly throughout the day with help.
 - Must be able to bend and kneel repeatedly.
 - Must be able to see fine detail in a variety of situations.
 - Must have good hearing including ability to distinguish changes in pitch.
 - Must have reasonable degree of agility to move through tightly cramped areas in various situations.
 - Must have acceptable sense of touch and smell.
 - Must have good range of motion in joints especially wrist, knees, elbows.
 - Must have good range of motion in back for twisting.
 - Must be able to work in potentially extreme environmental temperatures.
 - Must have acceptable sense of balance.
 - Must be able to work and reach on hands and knees.
 - Must be able to use a ladder and or step stool.
 - Must possess excellent hand-eye coordination.
 - May be asked to move large oxygen tanks.
 - Must possess an acceptable degree of dexterity in hands and fingers.
 - Must have good vision including peripheral vision, fine detail, distance, depth perception and ability to focus.

4. Emotional/mental requirements
 - Must be able to work efficiently and effectively under stressful conditions.
 - Must be able to respond quickly to a variety of medical situations (with training).
 - Must be able to cope with death either due to surgical complication or euthanasia.
 - Ability to rapidly and accurately process information.
 - Ability to delegate tasks.
 - Ability to recognize a need for assistance and ask for help.
 - Ability to control instinct (for example: while restraining it is most often required to tighten grip and NOT release the animal when they begin to struggle).
 - Ability to make decisions.
 - Ability to cope with frustrating situations and remain calm.
5. Potential/prolonged exposures
 - Prolonged exposure to various aqueous solutions including but not limited to dish soap, chlorhexidine and spectra soap.
 - Prolonged exposure to isopropanol, hydrogen peroxide.
 - Potential exposure to formalin solution.
 - Potential/prolonged exposure to isoflurane gas.
 - Prolonged exposure to quaternary ammonium cleaners and bleach.
 - Prolonged exposure to pressurized steam.
 - Potential exposure to sharps including needles and surgical blades.
6. Must speak fluent English.

Chapter 5: Interview With Intention



An interview needs to be crafted as carefully as a job description. You'll want to ask open-ended questions and really listen to the responses. Be sure to focus on:

- **Background**
- **Education**
- **Skill**
- **Insight**
- **Personality**
- **Current situation**
- **References**

Include these questions:

- What shifts or hours are you willing to work? Are you willing to work on weekends? What about emergency work (if necessary)?
- What is your minimum salary requirement? Some applicants are reluctant to give this for fear of underselling their skills or scaring off the interviewer so try to make them comfortable with a starting point for negotiations.

- How far do you live in relation to the job or will you be moving to the area?
- Will you be working for another organization while working here?

Human resources company Humetrics Inc. suggests insight questions such as the following:

- What do you think it takes to be a good spay/neuter veterinarian?
- What do you think distinguishes a good employee from a bad one?
- Tell me about the best boss you ever had.
- What type of person frustrates you the most? Why?
- What must an organization provide in order for you to do your best?
- If you could change one thing in your last (or current) job, what would it be? Why?
- What have you done that you are proud of?
- How do you like to be treated by your supervisor?
- If you could design an ideal working environment, what would it look like?
- Highlight two characteristics you feel you could improve.
- When I speak to your references, what do you think they will say about you?
- What else would you like me to know about you?
- What else would you like to know about the organization or position?

A happy and effective organization begins with the right hires.

This [ASPCApro webinar](#) by Amy Mills, CEO of Emancipet, ***Hiring the Right People for Your Culture***, provides solid guidance for every step of the way.

