

# Expanding your RVT Career The Journey to Earning a VTS

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# Outline

- What is a VTS?
- History and the Academies
- Application Process
- The Exam
- Answers to Common Questions
- Final Thoughts

# What is a Veterinary Technician Specialist?

- An RVT who has earned additional certification within a specialized area of veterinary medicine
- Mastered a specific skill set
- Advanced knowledge within the specialty
- Maintains recertification requirements



# VTS History

- In 1994, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) developed the Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties (CVTS)
  - Sets the standard and requirement for the formation of an academy
  - Governs all specialty Academies by providing guidelines for standards and procedures
- CVTS is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)
- In 1996, the Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians (AVECCT) became the first academy to earn designation

# Where are We Now

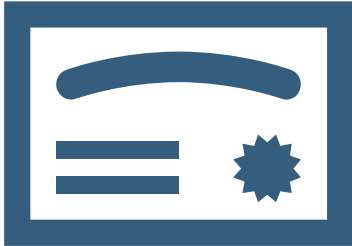
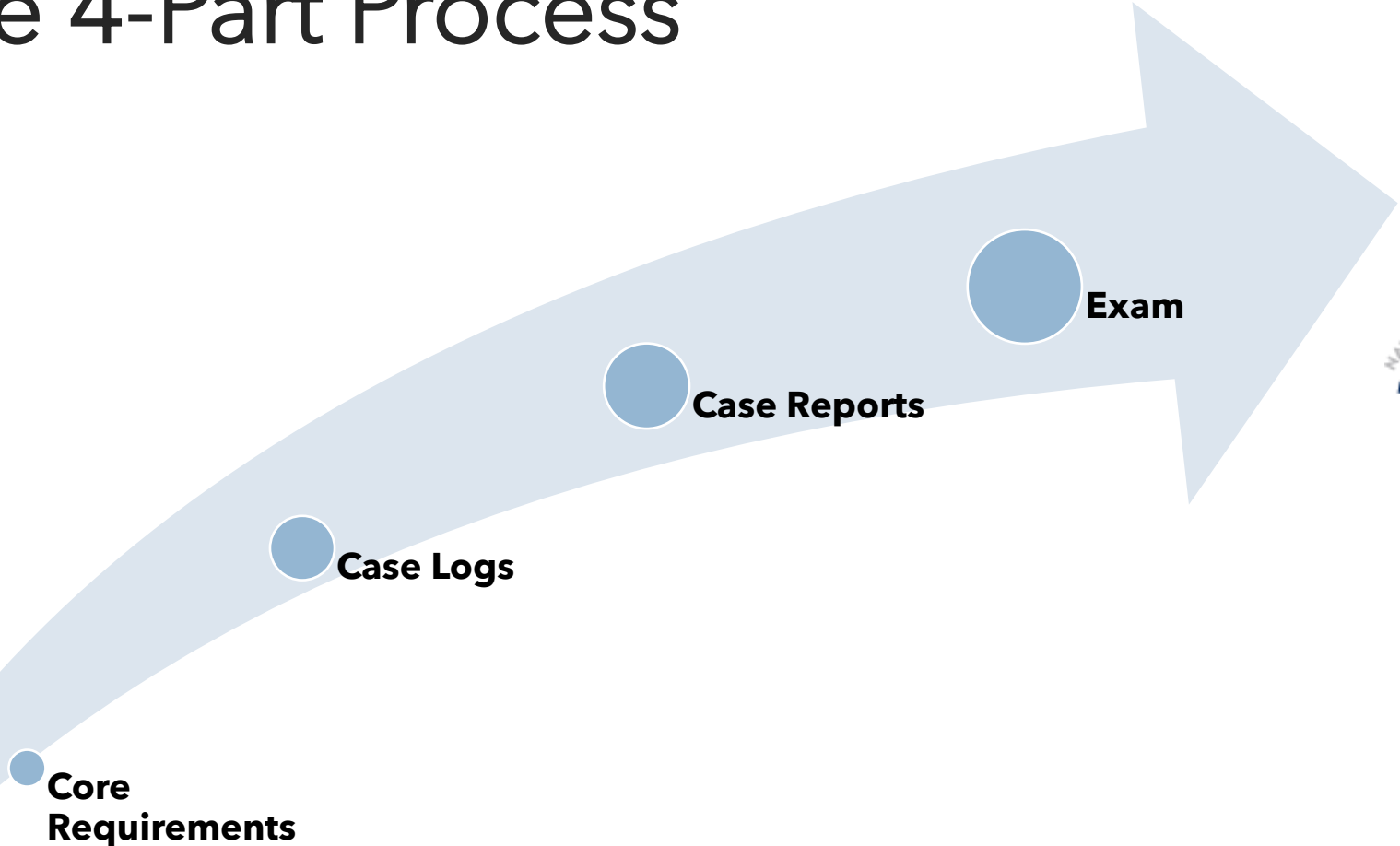
- 16 Academies with 30 specialties
- Encompassing most areas of veterinary medicine
- Over a 1000 VTS worldwide and growing yearly



# Before you Start

- Thoroughly read the application instructions
  - Multiple submission deadlines for different parts of the application process
- Each Academy has slightly different requirements for credentialing
- Average 2 yr. - 3 yr. time commitment

# The 4-Part Process



**VTS** | Veterinary  
Technician Specialist

# Part 1: Core Requirements

- Proof of graduation from an AVMA accredited VT program (Diploma)
- Proof of current in-date licensing with your provincial governing body
- Professional History and Employment experience
  - Minimum amount of hours worked (3 yrs. full-time/6,000 hrs. within the specialty)
  - Completed within the designated time frame
  - Your updated CV or resume
- Letters of recommendation from approved Diplomate, VTS or DVM
- CE hours
  - Minimum specialty hours required
  - RACE certified, national recognized conferences or taught by fellow VTS/diplomate of the specialty
  - Proof of attendance



# Part 1: Core Requirements cont.

- Advanced knowledge list/requirements
  - Provide evidence of advanced knowledge of disease processes specific to the area of specialization
- Advanced skills form
- Exam questions
- Waiver
- Additional requirements
  - Submit an “Intent to Apply”
  - Memberships to specialty societies and associations (NAVTA, VECCS)
  - Acquired certifications (RLAT)

# Advanced Skills Form

1. Set up and perform diagnostic non-invasive blood pressure measurement in a canine and a feline patient. Specify the method used (oscillometric, Doppler, etc.) and log values.
2. Set up and perform diagnostic invasive blood pressure measurement via pressure transducer or aneroid manometer in a canine and/or feline patient.
3. Demonstrate mastery of proper wound management techniques and/or bandage placement. Log at least 2 different wounds/bandages - specifying location and bandage type (supportive, protective, wet to dry, etc.).
4. Demonstrate mastery of proper application of splints. Log location and type.
5. Accurately and efficiently perform ocular diagnostic tests (including tonometry, fluorescein staining and/or Schirmer tear test). Log at least TWO tests.
6. Determine nutritional requirements for different life stages, lifestyles, and disease processes in the canine and feline. Log calculations.
7. Calculate and administer nutritional support through a variety of techniques (assisted feeding, feeding tubes, parenteral nutrition, etc.). Log calculations.

- Documentation of advanced competency through clinical experience at a mastery level
- Mastery: Being able to perform the task safely, with a high degree of success and without being coached or prompted in a wide variety of patients and situations
- Verified and signed off by Academy approved VTS, Diplomat or DVM
- Referenced in the case logs

# Writing Exam Questions

What ECG tracing abnormality would you find in a patient with a severely elevated serum potassium value (hyperkalemia)?

- a. Peaked T-waves
- b. Missing QRS complexes
- c. Inverted P-waves
- d. Prolonged T-waves

- Reflect an advanced level of knowledge!
- Ensure testing point is written before the stem
- Answers parallel the question
- Omit unnecessary information
- Don't use ambiguous terms (commonly, usually, rarely, frequently)
- Avoid negative questions
- Examinee should be able to answer the question before reading the answers!

# Part 2: Case logs

- Cases logged within the application year
- Minimum and maximum number of logs to be submitted (50-75 logs)
- Encompass the management of patients within the area of specialization
- Demonstrate your mastery of advanced nursing skills
- Variety in the type of cases logged and the use of an advanced skills

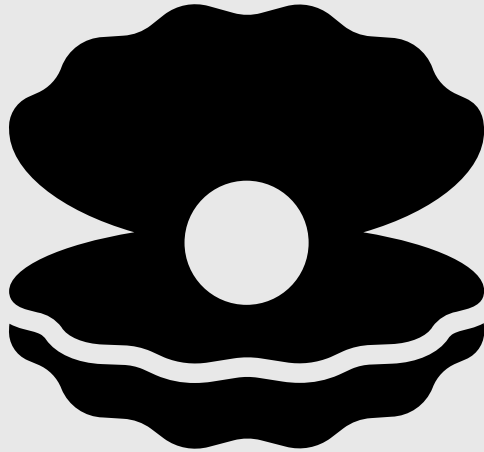
# Part 3: Case Reports

- Four in-depth reports demonstrating your expertise in the nursing management and disease knowledge of the patient
- Detailed discussion and understanding of the case must be demonstrated
  - Patient history, disease process, diagnostic testing, treatment, goals of therapy, outcome
  - Your nursing skills and the impact you had on the case should be showcased

# Case Report Choice

- Choose complete cases
- Cases where you performed many advanced skills and actively participated in the management of the patient
- Show variety among the reports
  - Different patients and disease process

# Pearls for Case Reports



- Follow the outline used in the case report examples
- Ensure the narrative follows the medical record
- Focus on your role within the case
- Leave the fluff out! Stick to the facts and relevant information
- Are your reports worthy of publication in a journal?
- Review, Review, Review!

# Common Mistakes – Case Logs/Reports

- Incomplete patient signalment
- Spelling and grammatical errors
  - Use of layman's terms (break vs fracture, low temp vs hypothermic)
  - Incorrect capitalization
    - Drug names (metronidazole)
- Use of non-approved abbreviations without expansion
- Use of drug brand names
- Incomplete drug dosages or missing drug dosages
  - Dosage, route, frequency, concentration, dose, drug volume
  - E.g. 6 kg dog > 0.05 mg/kg hydromorphone IV once (2 mg/ml, 0.3 mg, 0.15 ml)



# Application Support

## **The Academy**

- Mentorship program
- Answer questions regarding the application

## **Facebook**

- “Veterinary Technician Specialty Applicants/candidates”
- Specialty area FB pages (Anesthesia Nerds, ER vet tech rounds)

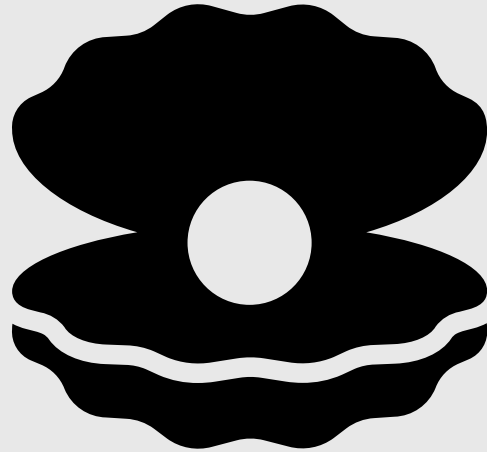
## **Co-workers**

## **Your provincial RVT association**

# Part 4: The Exam

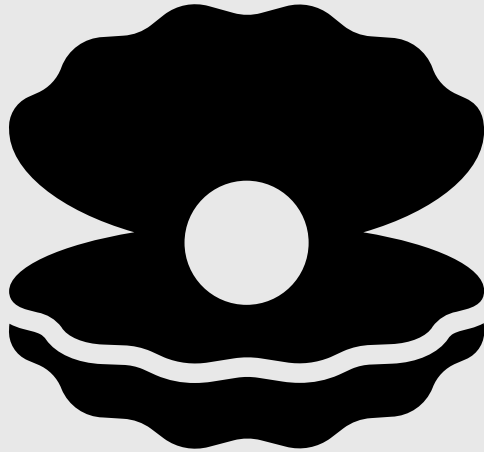
- Must pass all parts of the application process to be eligible to write the exam
- Exams are held at the annual conferences (IVECCS, ACVIM Forum)
- Written +/- clinical component
- Three attempts to pass the exam

# Pearls for Studying



- Begin once you submit the application
- Chunk out the info and create a study schedule
- Use multiple methods of learning - Don't just read and re-read!
- Memorization techniques (association, mnemonics, memory palace, Anki)
- 1<sup>st</sup> understand than memorize. Lack of understanding results in
  - less likely to remember and recall the information in the future
  - Less likely to adequately apply that information when writing the exam

# Pearls for Writing the Exam



- Be prepared
  - Exam format and how many questions?
  - How long do you have to write the exam?
  - What can you bring (calculator, pencil, eraser)?
- Keep track of time
- Read the questions slowly and try to answer before looking at the options
- Answer all the questions you know and go back to answer the questions you don't
- American written exam (Different diseases, drugs (etomidate), measurement values)

# Exam Support

## **Academy**

- Exam details and sample questions
- Reference list for studying material
- The “Advanced Knowledge List”

## **Study groups**

## **Facebook**

- Specialty area FB pages (Anesthesia Nerds, ER vet tech rounds, cytology coffeehouse....)

## **Co-workers**

- Case rounds

## **Internet**

- Ensure reputable source of information

## **Multi Disciplinary Reviews**

# Personal Factors for Success

- Organization and time management
- Dedication
- Attention to detail
- Resilience





GREAT THINGS NEVER  
CAME FROM COMFORT  
ZONES - SURROUND  
YOURSELF WITH  
PEOPLE WHO ONLY  
LIFT YOU HIGHER

We all have  
dreams. But in  
order to make  
dreams come  
into reality, it  
takes an awful  
lot of  
determination,  
dedication,  
self-discipline,  
and effort.

-- *Jesse Owens*

# What is the Cost to Specialize?

- Required CE costs
- Required Membership fees
- Application fee
  
- Exam fee
- Travel and lodging to conference to write the exam
  
- Yearly Academy dues
- CE costs for recertification



# Professional Opportunities

- Increased demand for RVT specialization
- Mentorship and teaching
- Leadership roles
- Lecturing
- Consulting
- Writing/publishing
- Academy representative/board member
- Assist at conferences (booth, wet lab, moderator)



# Do You Make More Money?

## **Labor market characteristics of veterinary technician specialists in 2007 (167 respondents)**

*Christopher L. Norkus, BS Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. December 1, 2009, Vol. 235, No. 11, Pages 1303-1306 <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.235.11.1303>*

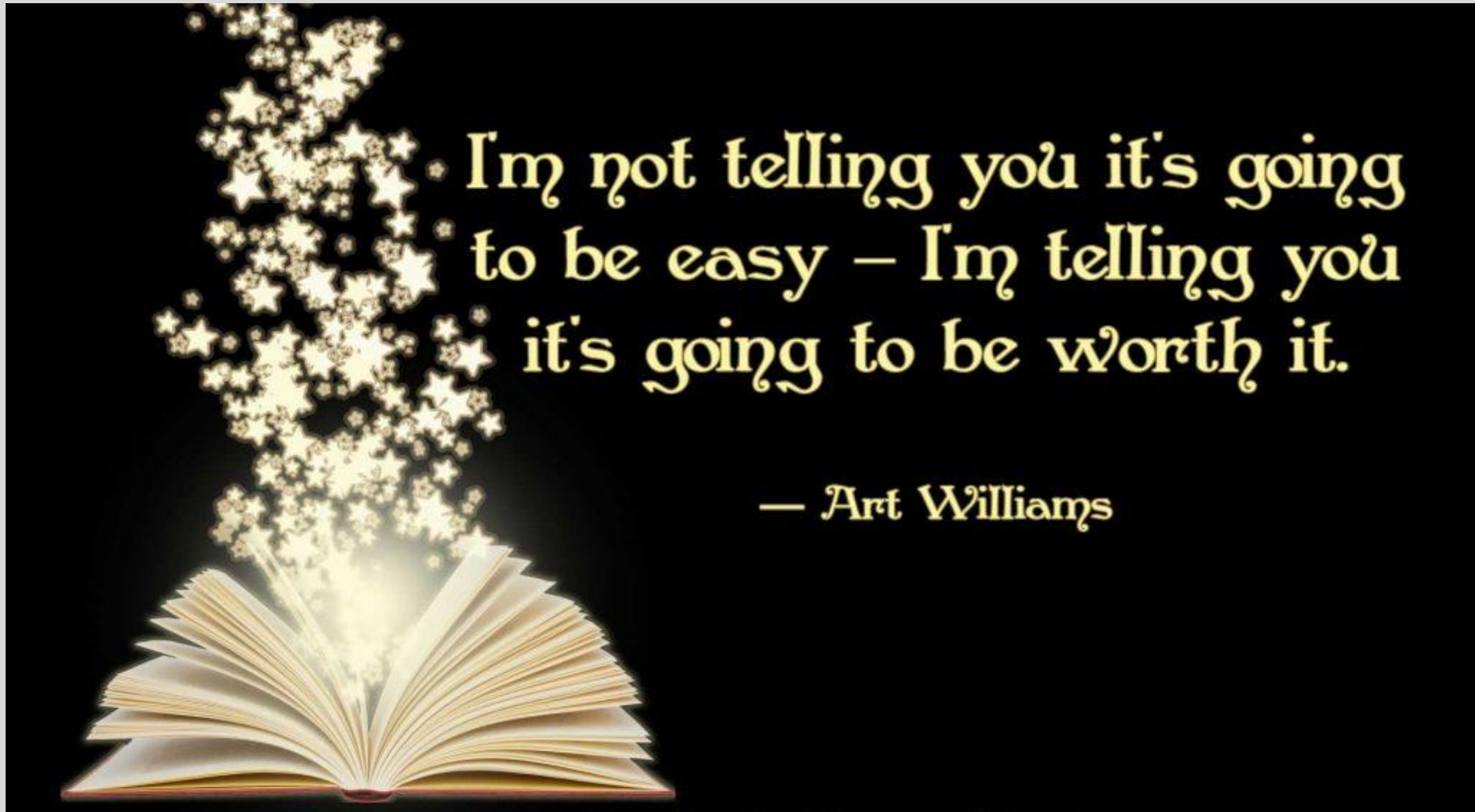
## **Characteristics of the labor market for veterinary technician specialists in 2013 (351 respondents)**

*Christopher L. Norkus, DVM; David J. Liss, BA; Linda S. Leighton, PhD Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association January 1, 2016, Vol. 248, No. 1, Pages 105-109 <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.248.1.105>*

- Most did not receive a 1-time bonus for achieving VTS certification
- 51% received a pay raise
- \$750 to \$1,500/yr. from the employer for continuing education

# Final Thoughts

- Bring awareness about VTS certification within the RVT profession
- Encourage and support those interested in pursuing a VTS
- See the value and worth of furthering your career



I'm not telling you it's going  
to be easy – I'm telling you  
it's going to be worth it.

— Art Williams



# Thank You

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