

CAREER GUIDE FOR LABORATORY ANIMAL CARETAKER

SOC Code: 31-3096

Pay Band(s): 1, 2 and 3 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Feed, water, and examine pets and other non-farm animals for signs of illness, disease, or injury in laboratories and animal hospitals and clinics. Clean and disinfect cages and work areas, and sterilize laboratory and surgical equipment. May provide routine post-operative care, administer medication orally or topically, or prepare samples for laboratory examination under the supervision of veterinary or laboratory animal technologists or technicians, veterinarians, or scientists.

Laboratory Animal Caretaker positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Laboratory and Research Services Career Group](#):

[Laboratory and Research Aide](#)

[Laboratory and Research Technician](#)

[Laboratory and Research Specialist I](#)

While Laboratory Animal Caretakers within the Commonwealth are all located within the Laboratory and Research Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Veterinary Science](#)
[Agricultural Services](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Laboratory Animal Caretaker commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.
2. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
3. Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
4. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
5. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
6. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
7. Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.

8. Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
9. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
10. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Laboratory Animal Caretaker commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Knowledge of:

1. Plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.
2. Information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Laboratory Animal Caretaker commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Ability to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
3. Quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
4. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
5. Make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.
6. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
7. Keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.

Tasks

Note: *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Laboratory Animal Caretaker. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

1. Administer anesthetics during surgery and monitor the effects on animals.
2. Administer medication, immunizations, and blood plasma to animals as prescribed by veterinarians.
3. Assist veterinarians in examining animals to determine the nature of illnesses or injuries.
4. Clean and maintain kennels, animal holding areas, examination and operating rooms, and animal loading/unloading facilities to control the spread of disease.

5. Clean, maintain, and sterilize instruments and equipment.
6. Collect laboratory specimens such as blood, urine, and feces for testing.
7. Examine animals to detect behavioral changes or clinical symptoms that could indicate illness or injury.
8. Fill medication prescriptions.
9. Hold or restrain animals during veterinary procedures.
10. Monitor animals' recovering from surgery and notify veterinarians of any unusual changes or symptoms.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The Laboratory Animal Caretaker occupation has **Realistic**, **Investigative**, and **Social** characteristics as described below:

Realistic — Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

Investigative — Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

Social — Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Laboratory Animal Caretaker positions in state government.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor provides the following information:

Laboratory animal caretaker feed, water, and examine pets and other nonfarm animals for signs of illness, disease, or injury in laboratories and animal hospitals and clinics. Clean and disinfect cages and work areas, and sterilize laboratory and surgical equipment. May provide routine postoperative care, administer medication orally or topically, or prepare samples for laboratory examination under the supervision of veterinary or laboratory animal technologists or technicians, veterinarians, or scientists.

Most Laboratory Animal Caretaker positions require high school or equivalent. Responsibilities are taught with short-term on-the-job training. For further career progression it is recommended that individuals who have a love of animals consider obtaining an associate degree as a

veterinary technician.

There are primarily two levels of education and training for entry to this occupation—a 2-year program for veterinary technicians and a 4-year program for veterinary technologists. Most entry-level veterinary technicians have a 2-year degree, usually an associate degree, from an accredited community college program in veterinary technology, in which courses are taught in clinical and laboratory settings using live animals.

Technologists and technicians usually begin work as trainees in routine positions under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. Entry-level workers whose training or educational background encompasses extensive hands-on experience with a variety of laboratory equipment, including diagnostic and medical equipment, usually require a shorter period of on-the-job training. As they gain experience, technologists and technicians take on more responsibility and carry out more assignments under only general veterinary supervision, and some eventually may become supervisors.

In Virginia, the university that offers a veterinary program is Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (<http://www.vt.edu/>). Blue Ridge Community College (<http://www.br.cc.va.us/>) and Northern Virginia Community College (<http://www.nv.cc.va.us/>) offer educational programs for veterinary technicians.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth

competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Laboratory Animal Caretaker**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
1	Laboratory and Research Aide
2	Laboratory and Research Technician
3	Laboratory and Research Specialist I

Sample Career Path

Laboratory and Research Aide

The Laboratory and Research Aide role provides a career track for laboratory animal caretakers who follow a highly structured schedule in performing simple, repetitive tasks under the immediate supervision of higher-level laboratory, or research personnel.

Laboratory and Research Technician

The Laboratory and Research Technician role provides a career track for laboratory animal caretakers that perform a variety of laboratory and/or research tasks in support of research/teaching, clinical services, field research or a regulatory laboratory. Employees are responsible for a variety of standard procedures that range from routine to specialized in the areas of assisting in routine surgical procedures; maintaining animal health and welfare; recording data, and operating and maintaining tools and equipment.

Laboratory and Research Specialist I

The Laboratory and Research Specialist I role provides career tracks for laboratory specialists who support in the performance of various technical, scientific, analytical or animal care activities for clinical, research, regulatory or laboratory programs, or in a veterinary hospital or

animal care facility. Laboratory and research support responsibilities range from journey-level to advanced level.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

Professional Organizations

American Veterinary Medical Association

<http://www.avma.org/>

North American Veterinary Technician Association

<http://www.navta.net/>

Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Society

<http://www.veccs.org/>