

How to Best Utilize a Shelter **RVT**

Stacy Murphy, **RVT**



“RVTs provide first line care to animals who are sick, injured and homeless, while working hand-in-hand to provide treatment with veterinarians both offsite and in the shelter. They act as leaders in caring for the animals and are a useful resource for other staff members and the community. Shelter RVTs help provide medical care, environmental enrichment and TLC to animals that have no family to care for them.”

Darci Burtch, **RVT**



“One of the biggest challenges shelters face is resources - they are very limited and need to be utilized to their fullest potential. Due to the limits resources can place on a shelter, hiring a DVM is often not possible. RVTs therefore play a vital role in providing a high standard of patient care in a shelter setting thanks to their medical expertise and overall skill set.”

In early 2019, ACER Consulting released the results of a study exploring the function, level of utilization, impact, and ultimately the value that Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) bring to Ontario veterinary practices. It was found that each extra RVT per vet **increased gross revenues per vet by over \$78,000.**¹ The report also states that almost 25% of clinics surveyed said that their vets often or always perform RVT duties.

The needs in shelter medicine are different.

RVTs and DVMs work closely in a shelter setting, even in the cases where a DVM is not on staff. By communicating clearly through the VCPR, the RVT is able to carry out tasks that have been outlined by the DVM. The biggest goal is to save more lives, and when RVTs are employed in a shelter where they are able to fully utilize their skills, we get one step closer to achieving that goal.

RVTs can:

Educate adopters regarding their new pets' specific health concerns, acting as a bridge between the shelter and the community veterinarian.

Administer vaccines and conduct general health exams.

Monitor the ongoing health status of animals in the shelter, often identifying health concerns before they become too serious (which will help alleviate the cost of hospitalization).

Conduct in-house laboratory work, such as ear cytology, fecal analysis, urinalysis, and venipuncture – this cuts out the need to send samples to a vet clinic or reference lab, thus saving the shelter money.

Help create and carryout protocols that are commonly seen in shelter medicine.

Engage the public. Teach children about the various jobs that RVTs do both in shelter and in clinic, through community programs.

Ready to hire an RVT?
Post a job ad for an RVT at
www.oavt.org.

References:

1. Exploring the value that Registered Veterinary Technicians bring to Ontario companion animal practices, ACER Consulting, 2019