

The

BEVA

 **Employment Toolkit**

for new or recent graduates and interns



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1) Introduction

This 'toolkit' is designed to provide the new graduate with guidance on what to look for in their first job with particular emphasis on internships. It recognises that employment varies considerably across the equine veterinary sector and the new graduate should realise that not every job can offer everything but it is hoped that this guide will provide prompts of things to consider when applying for jobs. The toolkit represents BEVA's view on the UK equine veterinary industry but the principles apply internationally.

2) General Overview

- An internship/junior assistant should be viewed as an intensive yet formative stage of a career. BEVA believes that interns are valuable members of any hospital or practice team, and should be treated as such. Their enthusiasm should be fostered, and their labours rewarded both financially, and intangibly with experience.
- New graduates can be employed as interns in veterinary practice in a number of ways – they can become an employee of the business (eg assistant or intern in a veterinary practice or hospital) or be registered as a postgraduate student (as an intern at a University clinic). This is an important distinction as it may have different consequences in the benefits offered (see below).
- There is no substitute to visiting the practice/hospital to get a better idea of the above. It is then easier to see the facilities and to meet the people you will be working with. Take time to talk to the current interns as they will be able to give you the pros and cons of the job as well as answer questions such as caseload.



- An internship is usually based within an equine hospital although it may include periods of time as an ambulatory veterinarian. The latter is acceptable as a useful part of new graduate training but BEVA believes that the best training is obtained as being part of a team within a hospital environment where guidance can be sought and obtained.
- An internship is for a limited position and should not be for less than one year, but not for more than two.
- Prospective interns should review the structure of the internship and should consider the following aspects:
 - a. The case load - difficult to make firm recommendations as a high caseload can be inhibitory to learning while a low caseload limits the experience gained ('you can do 1 thing on 100 cases, or a 100 things on 1 case').
 - b. The structure and variety of rotations as this will reflect in the skills acquired (see below)
 - c. Rota - BEVA agrees that long hours, with resulting high exposure to clinical cases, are an important part of an internship. However, interns also need to be provided with sufficient time off to rest and

for independent learning. Out of hours work is an important part of an internship, but a rota should not exceed 1:2 over a significant time period. The number of interns employed is also an indication of the rota as well as the caseload.

- d. Provision of training – both training in the workplace as well as external CPD is considered an important aspect of an internship (see below under ‘Benefits’).
- e. Research - Interns should all be encouraged to be involved in Morbidity and Mortality rounds as it encourages clinical audit. Interns should undertake some form of clinical audit or research project. It is expected that this should contribute to an output – be it improving clinical practice, local presentation, or presentation at a conference (eg local BVA events or the BEVA Congress).

4) Skill Acquisition

An internship should consist of periods of time covering as many aspects of equine veterinary practice but BEVA realises that the structure of the job will vary considerably between practices. It will also depend on case-load. It is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of skills that should be acquired within the first year because every internship is different but it should be as diverse as possible. Below is a list of areas that an intern would be expected to be allowed to perform, practice and master during the course of their internship:

- in-patient care (including catheter placement, blood sampling, drug dosages and subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous drug administration, common laboratory tests)
- colic examination (including rectal examination, stomach tubing)

- lameness examination (including simple diagnostic analgesic techniques)
- assessment of wounds and identification of synovial sepsis
- diagnostic imaging (including radiography, ultrasonography, endoscopy)
- administration and monitoring of general anaesthesia

The new graduate should enquire with the internship supervisor what areas they will be exposed to and what they would be expected to get out of the internship. Some, but not all, internships may include exposure to teaching of undergraduates for which the intern should be prepared. However, although at an early stage of their careers, this should not be feared and can actually be a highly satisfying aspect of the job.

5) Professional Support



- Each intern should be provided with a supervisor who would normally be the interns line manager. The intern should have time-tabled formal meetings to review the interns progress, at least twice during each year of the internship, and provide them with a means to air any grievances.

- It is useful to have an additional person allocated in a mentoring role. This does not have to be someone senior but should be someone whom the new graduate respects and is comfortable with. This person should be available for the first 3 months to help monitor the new graduates progress. Please note that BEVA operates a mentoring service that has advantages in being independent of your employer.
- All interns should be provided with adequate health and safety information.

6) Facilities

- The hospital should have adequate facilities and staffing for a wide variety of clinical activities. The RCVS Hospital status tier provides some guarantee of these facilities.
- Each intern should have access to adequate workspace with a suitable area to perform book work and learning, including use of a desk, photocopier and networked computer.

7) Benefits

a. *A salary/stipend*

This will vary depending on whether the intern is an employee (when salaries tend to be higher) or registered as a post-graduate student and receive a tax-free stipend (currently ~£15,000/annum in most Universities). Salaries should be considered in the light of other benefits offered by their employer (see below)

b. *Vacation*

BEVA supports the legal requirement that workers who work a 5-day week must receive at least 28 days' paid annual leave per year, including bank holidays (i.e. 20 days plus bank holidays or days off in lieu)

c. *Sickness pay*

This can vary between internships. Universities often have more comprehensive sick pay arrangements – for example 4 weeks full pay.

d. *Maternity pay*

Although unusual, it is possible that employed interns may be entitled to paid maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

e. *Private health care plan*

Some businesses provide a private health care programme for all their employees. It is advised that new interns should enquire about the availability of such provision.

f. *Pension scheme*

This will vary between internships. Those interns who are registered as post-graduate students will not be allowed in law to pay into a pension scheme as they are paid a tax-free stipend as a student.

g. *External CPD provision*

Due to the limit period of employment for an internship, only limited external CPD is usually provided but as a guide a minimum of 2 days/year is recommended.

h. *Postgraduate qualification*

Some internships will be linked to a post-graduate qualification but this will usually only be at Universities

i. *Benefits in kind*

Many internships provide a car and/or accommodation free of charge

8) Other Things to Consider _____

a. *Notice/probationary periods*

Some jobs provide a probationary period after which either party can decide whether to continue employment. This is not usually necessary for such short term employment as internships but should the internship not work out as expected, a reasonable notice period would be advantageous (usually between 1-3 months).

b. *Income protection*

This is unlikely to be provided by the employer but should be seriously considered by new graduates taking up internships as it is relatively cheap and provides some financial security if you can't work for any reason. New graduates should be guided to financial services tailored to their situation.

9) Future Planning – Career Goals _____

It is worth considering what the internship or your first job will deliver for your future career. In terms of internships, these can be used as a springboard to obtain further training as a Resident. If that is your goal, plan early and consider the previous record that the practice has achieved in in terms progressing to future training programmes.