



Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Spay/Neuter Veterinarians

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This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Veterinary Task Force to Advance High Quality, High Volume Spay/Neuter
was sponsored by ASPCA® and PetSmart Charities®.

Introduction

On December 1, 2006, the ASPCA® and PetSmart Charities® convened a veterinary task force to advance best practices in high quality, high volume spay/neuter. Over a three day period, board-certified surgeons, anesthesiologists and internists joined with epidemiologists, public health experts, private practice owners and spay/neuter clinic operators to begin the process of establishing guidelines for these programs. Recognizing as a key issue the need to attract more top quality surgeons to the field, the task force commissioned James R. Weedon, DVM, to produce *Strategies for Recruiting & Retaining Spay/Neuter Veterinarians*, a compilation of insights and techniques that have served the country's most successful programs well.



As Executive Director of SNAP, Houston, Dr. Weedon directs the operations of two mobile spay/neuter clinics, two stationary spay/neuter clinics, and a stationary wellness clinic. He previously served as regional director of the Banfield Pet Hospital in Portland, Oregon, and as director of operations for PetSmart Veterinary Services in Phoenix, AZ.

High quality, high volume spay/neuter programs are efficient surgical initiatives that meet or exceed current veterinary medical standards of care while providing accessible, targeted sterilization for large numbers of dogs and cats in order to reduce their overpopulation and subsequent euthanasia.

Although these programs face frequent challenges, such as working with unowned animals and pets belonging to indigent families, operating in locations ranging from sophisticated urban centers to remote locations without electricity and substantial funding limitations, the task force believes that a high standard of care is both essential and achievable in all circumstances.

The Challenge

If you're struggling to find the right veterinarian for your spay/neuter clinic, you're not alone. In fact, there is a growing sense that staffing may be the single biggest challenge spay/neuter programs face as they try to end pet overpopulation with all its tragic consequences.

The current number of veterinarians in the United States (81,468 according to the American Veterinary Medical Association website, www.avma.org) would all fit in a major university's football stadium. The supply of new veterinarians is only around 2,600 per year. According to the AVMA, the majority of veterinarians are involved in private practice but many are also employed by universities, pharmaceutical companies, the military, city, county, state and federal government agencies. The demand is great in all areas. According to the 2005 *Veterinary Economics* Job Satisfaction and Professional Outlook Study, 32% of veterinary hospitals plan to add a veterinarian in the next five years and graduating veterinarians can expect to receive four to five bona fide offers. Clearly, we are dealing with an employees' market and will be for the foreseeable future.

In this highly competitive environment, our programs face some additional challenges. The majority of veterinarians don't consider spay/neuter to be as exciting or prestigious as private practice or specialization in a specific area of interest. In addition, as non-profit organizations targeting those who cannot afford full veterinary fees, we must raise the money for salaries and equipment while fee income is modest or non-existent.

Our challenge is to overcome negative perceptions and find creative ways to meet financial expectations so we can recruit the quality people we need to do this very important work.

Perception is Reality

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It helps to look at the situation from the veterinarians' point of view. There are several perceptions of spay/neuter medicine – some of them accurate and some not – that you'll need to keep in mind to fashion job descriptions and recruitment messages that will attract the veterinarians you need.

- *Quality concerns.* Any veterinarian you hire should be very concerned about quality of care. Unfortunately, your prospects 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 price are never achieved at the expense of quality. The veterinary task force has developed standards for high quality, high volume spay/neuter that meet or exceed current veterinary practice. These standards will be submitted for publication to a peer-reviewed veterinary journal in October, 2007. Visit www.ASPCApro.org for news on publication status. By making it clear that you adhere to these published standards, you will eliminate one of the major obstacles to attracting quality veterinarians.
- *Fear of the numbers.* Some veterinarians are intimidated by the numbers of surgeries done on a daily basis at high quality, high volume spay/neuter clinics. While an experienced surgeon at one of our clinics may do as many as 50 surgeries in a day, the veterinarians you're trying to hire may never have done close to that number. You'll need to be clear about your expectations but, at the same time, assure your prospects that, if the desire is there, surgical speed will come with training and practice. Providing an opportunity to observe a good team in action will let your prospects see first hand what can be achieved with the right support and procedures in place.
- *The one-trick pony.* Veterinarians considering full-time spay/neuter work may be concerned that they will become or 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 younger 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.* Many veterinarians worry about how their colleagues will view them if they work in your clinic. You've probably heard the comments: "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 that we, as a field, 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.

Crafting the Position

High quality, high volume clinics can take several forms. To learn about different models, check out the following websites:

Mobile Clinic: www.snapus.org

MASH Clinic:
www.shelteroutreachservices.org

Independent stationary clinic with transport:
www.humanealliance.org

Stationary clinic within a humane society but open to the public. www.richmondspca.org

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. As you develop your job description, consider the following:

- *Organizational mission:* It is very important to make sure that any 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 ferals and/or shelter animals, it will be important, during the hiring process, to make this clear and to provide prospects with resources to learn about the unique challenges of dealing with these special populations. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians, www.sheltervet.org and The Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project, www.feralcatproject.org are excellent places 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.

These two team models may prove useful:

SNAP Stationary Clinic: A clinic manager supervises all non-professional staff and manages inventory, payroll, scheduling, maintenance issues, etc. Because of heavy telephone traffic, multiple receptionists are required to handle phones, deal with walk-in traffic, and answer e-mail communications. The surgical area is normally staffed by a surgical technician who works in the surgery suite with the surgeon, two technicians who work the prep table anesthetizing and intubating surgical patients, one technician monitoring recovering patients, one technician preparing and autoclaving surgical packs and an animal handler moving animals and cleaning cages. This level of staffing supports one surgeon altering approximately 50 animals per day.

SNAP Mobile Clinic: A particular challenge for mobile clinics is monitoring performance when space limitations and distance make it impractical to have supervisory personnel on site. A clinic manager who is an experienced veterinary technician is in charge of the SNAP mobile clinic - ordering supplies, staying within the budget, payroll, maintaining records and producing reports, handling intake and discharge, supervising lay personnel, and maintaining the vehicle. A second technician or animal handler supports the clinic manager with intake, prep table, monitoring, medical records, discharge etc. The veterinary surgeon arrives after intake, is responsible for the pre-surgery exams and surgeries and leaves before discharge. SNAP doesn't use an appointment system. Patients are accepted on a first come first served basis as cage space allows. Other mobile programs where appointments are scheduled may employ an administrative assistant to handle the task or delegate it to partner organizations hosting the clinic.

- *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 directly to a Board of Directors. When the spay/neuter

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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 available 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 (DEA) 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.

SNAP Job Description

(prepared by Administaff)

Job Title: Chief of Surgery
Department: Clinic Facilities
Reports To: Director of Operations
FLSA Status: Exempt

SUMMARY

Primary individual responsible for medical care provided to clinic patients in accordance with established policy and procedure. Supervise and provide highest quality medical care possible to patients served through spay/neuter clinics in a humane and professional manner. Provide management and oversight of clinic staff and facilities.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

- Promote the humane care and treatment of animals at all times.
- Adhere to the highest ethical standards and provision of veterinary care in a safe, competent, professional and humane manner.
- Maintain and provide proof of a current license to practice veterinary medicine in required states.
- Supervise patient flow to maximize quantity and quality of services provided.
- Complete wellness and surgical procedures in a competent, safe and efficient manner.
- Supervise entire team involved in spay/neuter clinics.
- Available by telephone, digital pager or cellular phone after hours for post-surgical complications or emergencies.
- Maintain complete surgical, complication, mortality, and controlled drug logs and individual patient medical records.
- Maintain clean, neat and orderly work area at all times.
- Assist with monitoring use of medical supplies and supply requisition.
- Comply with all provisions of applicable professional service contracts with municipalities and private organizations as required.
- Comply with and enforce clinic procedures and employee manuals.
- Maintain controlled drug licenses and facility licenses as required.
- Maintain professional liability insurance at levels sufficient to meet minimum requirements recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association.
- Participate in and provide proof of continuing education requirements.
- Adhere to applicable state and federal laws governing the practice of veterinary medicine.
- Be respectful of coworkers and treat both subordinate and superior staff in a professional manner.
- Attend safety meetings and training.
- Adhere to OSHA compliance policies & procedures.
- Adhere to parameters of approved budget.
- Participate in special events and perform other duties as required.
- Maintain strict confidentiality on client, patient and donor information.
- Establish and coordinate continuing education programs for subordinate staff.
- Work with Clinic Manager to create and distribute work schedules for subordinate staff.

QUALIFICATIONS

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE

Doctoral degree (DVM).

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret common scientific and technical journals, financial reports, and legal documents. Ability to respond to common inquiries or complaints from customers, regulatory agencies, or members of the business community. Ability to write speeches and articles for publication that conform to prescribed style and format. Ability to effectively present information to top management, public groups, and/or boards of directors.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS

Ability to work with mathematical concepts such as probability and statistical inference, and fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and trigonometry. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios, and proportions to practical situations.

REASONING ABILITY

Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

COMPUTER SKILLS

To perform this job successfully, an individual should have knowledge of word processing software; E-mail; spreadsheet software; inventory software; payroll systems; Internet software; order processing systems and database software.

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS

DVM, DPS, DEA, Appropriate State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners License, Malpractice insurance.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Directly supervises employees in the Clinic Facilities Department. Carries out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws. Responsibilities include interviewing, hiring, and training employees; planning, assigning, and directing work; appraising performance; rewarding and disciplining employees; addressing complaints and resolving problems.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is occasionally exposed to toxic or caustic chemicals, sharp instruments and risk of electrical shock.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand; use hands to finger, handle, or feel and talk or hear. The employee is frequently required to walk; reach with hands and arms and stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl. The employee is occasionally required to sit; climb or balance and taste or smell. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Must be able to type written communications, enter and retrieve data via computer keyboard and monitor. Must be able to visually and aurally assess the health and well-being of patients. Must be able to communicate verbally and aurally via telephone and in person and also via written material. Requires ability to lift patients, equipment and supplies up to 50 pounds, considerable walking, standing and moving of equipment and patients.

Establishing the Rewards

To be competitive in recruiting veterinarians, you must know the going rate in your area and offer competitive salaries as well as competitive benefits.

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 heart strings or play to the conscience. You have to remember that, although 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

The cost of a veterinary education is huge and nearly 90% of veterinarians graduate with debt. The average debt is approximately \$100,000 and the standard payback is 10 years (JAVMA. Vol. 229. No. 8. October 15, 2006).

Corporate veterinary practices (and most other practices) know that the average starting salary for 2006 graduates accepting an offer from a small animal practice was \$57,117 (www.avma.org) and that the average practitioner salary in 2005 was \$105,510 (AVMA Report of Veterinary Compensation). To be competitive in recruiting veterinarians, you must know the going rate in your area and offer competitive salaries as well as competitive 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 the following:

- 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 non-profit organization to offer the kind of benefits that a large private clinic can provide. According to March 2007 Forbes Small Business Magazine, one solution might be to use one of about 700 professional employer organizations (PEOs) in the U.S. These PEOs work by becoming the legal employer of your staff for purposes of payroll, benefits and human resources (HR). By aggregating the employees of many businesses, a PEO can offer better rates on health and workers' compensation insurance, while giving employees big-business-style 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. Using a PEO allows the organization to compete more effectively for employees. The organization can concentrate on providing services rather than HR, insurance and legal compliance with a myriad state and federal regulations.

PEOs have been around since the early 1980s. Because PEOs help business owners comply with state laws, it is important to choose one that operates in your state. The National Association of Professional Employers Organizations (www.napeo.org) offers a directory of its 400 member PEOs 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/Lifestyle issues

Over 75% of the 2007 graduates of veterinary schools were females (JAVMA. Vol. 230. No. 12). At some time in their careers, many of these women may be seeking a balance between their professional lives and family responsibilities. You may be in a much better position than a private practice to help them achieve that balance. Here are some things you might consider when crafting job descriptions to appeal to this rich talent resource:

- Spay/neuter surgery hours that enable the veterinarian to be home to meet school aged children
- Job-sharing
- Part-time positions
- Flexible schedules
- Eliminating evening, weekend, and emergency duties
- Child care assistance

As a spay/neuter clinic, you have a lot to offer those veterinarians, regardless of gender, who:

- Want shorter days than are typical for many positions
- Want less administrative and supervisory responsibilities
- Prefer working with animals rather than with the guardians of animals
- Want less “down” time (they want to get their work done and go home)
- Want to feel good about helping the animals
- Enjoy surgery and the feeling of accomplishment they get from altering enough animals to make a difference

Be proactive in communicating these very significant lifestyle advantages.

Part-time veterinarians

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 who perform all types of surgeries at 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.

Two Approaches to Paying Part-time Surgeons

Surgeons on the SNAP mobile spay/neuter vans are paid \$300 per shift. The expectation is that each surgeon will perform 22 surgeries per shift. A fast surgeon with a good team will complete the surgeries between 9am and 1pm, making for a very good hourly rate of \$75. This method of payment provides incentive for surgeons to increase their speed.

Surgeons in the SNAP stationary clinics are paid \$10 per surgery. The expectation is that a minimum of 30-40 surgeries will be performed. The hours are up to the surgeon, but the cut-off time is 4pm. Here again, there is an incentive for speed.

No matter how you pay your surgeons, it is very important to insist that standards of care be met at all times.

Getting the Word Out

There are many ways to seek out veterinarians who might be interested in working for your clinic.

Advertising. While placing employment opportunities in veterinary journals is still a common practice, it is slow, costly and usually lacking in results. Most veterinary schools have a web site for postings. Local, state and national veterinary and some national animal welfare organizations have electronic classifieds that are faster and cheaper than print ads.

Keep in mind that placing a notice with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians does little to increase the pool of veterinarians focusing on spay/neuter. The goal is to get new graduates to enter this career path or to get experienced veterinarians to change career paths. You can find a list of placements for electronic ads at www.humanealliance.org/HA2/finding.htm.

Veterinary Schools. If you have a good training veterinarian on staff who can mentor a new graduate, you might target the veterinary schools. They are generally very helpful in assisting senior students in finding positions prior to graduation.

State board and local associations. If you need immediate help, you'll want to find someone who already possesses the job competences. Most state boards of veterinary medical examiners will provide a list of all currently licensed veterinarians for that state along with their addresses. Many will provide the information on a disk for a very reasonable fee (less than \$10). With this information, you can send a recruitment letter to every veterinarian licensed in your region or state. Asking a member of your local association to take fliers to a meeting and requesting time to speak to the membership about the work of your organization are other good ways to get the word out.

Colleagues in animal welfare. According to Cate Mansfield, Executive Director of the Shenandoah Valley Spay/Neuter Clinic, it's a good idea to let animal welfare organizations in your area know that you're looking. They probably work with shelter-friendly veterinarians in private practice and would be the first to hear of someone thinking about making a change.

Veterinary reception. You might consider hosting an event for veterinarians at your facility. Not only will you attract veterinarians interested in your work, you may also get some of the nay-sayers in the door and have an opportunity to dispel some misconceptions.

Word of mouth. Word of mouth and networking can be effective recruiting tools. If your reputation is one of doing quality work and being a good employer, past and current veterinarians can often help recruit classmates and colleagues.

You might consider hosting an event for veterinarians at your facility.

Sample ads:

Tired of private practice, emergencies, working six or seven days a week? Try limited client contact, no emergencies, Monday through Friday only. Shenendoah Valley Spay/Neuter Clinic in Harrisonburg, VA might be the place for you. Great support staff and quality medical protocol. (Humane Alliance)

Associate needed for small animal practice. Cleanliness preferred. Intelligence preferred. Sanity a must. (Mark Opperman)

Associate eaten by Chihuahua. Need replacement to start immediately. Must have strength of 10 oxen, brilliance of Einstein, and can-do attitude. Also, must like dogs. (Mark Opperman)

Selling the Job

Whatever methods you choose for getting the word out, Hospital Management Editor Mark Opperman suggests the following in the September, 2006 issue of *Veterinary Economics*:

- *Develop compelling recruiting materials.* You'll need a professional-looking folder that you can mail to veterinary schools or interested individuals. Include your organization's general informational brochure, newsletters, recent news clippings, letters of support from clients – anything that shows your clinic in a positive light. Provide information about your town or area as a good place to work and live. In most cases, a personal letter should be sent with the folder.
- *Keep it upbeat.* Don't depress candidates by dwelling on the enormity of the problem. Show them how they can have a positive impact by working with your dynamic team. Provide pictures of your clinic, the happy and healthy animals that leave there, and the highly qualified staff members who make it happen.
- *Tout your strengths.* If you're in a rural area with a lower cost of living and good schools, use that as a selling point. If you're in an exciting city with great cultural opportunities, use that. The point is that every location and organization offers some special qualities. Find those and highlight them.
- *Accentuate the positive.* If you've developed a job description that offers part-time work with flexible hours and no weekends or evenings, put that up front. You'll immediately get the attention of candidates who are looking for just such opportunities.
- *Make your ad stand out.* Consider using humor.

The Interview

A veterinarian out of school just three years says during an interview that she has to make \$80,000 per year (she has a large student debt) and needs good benefits (she is a single mother of two children). Her three years of experience includes some spay/neuter clinic work at a shelter and the ability to perform around 40 surgeries per day. Since SNAP has good benefits for full-time employees and we guarantee a minimum of \$300 per day for veterinarians, quick calculations tell me I can assure her that SNAP will meet her requirements if she works a minimum of five days per week. Some potential employers might have thought her salary and benefits requirements were high for her stage of career and experience but, if she has the skills and willingness to work at least five productive days per week, it would be a win-win for both parties.

Now that you've defined the job with a job description, written the ad and actively recruited, you will, one hopes, receive some applicants for the position. It is important to have an organized and systematic plan for the interview. You'll want to ask open ended questions and really listen to the responses. Since it is illegal to ask any question that does not pertain to the applicant's ability to perform the job, you'll want to confine your questions to the following topics:

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

During the interview, be sure to ask the following 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?

Humetrics, Inc., a human resource company, 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?

If you determine that you want to hire a candidate, find out what he or she needs to be able to work for you. You may discover that, with a little creativity, you can put together job opportunities your prospects won't be able to resist.

A Final Word about Turnover

“Employees join organizations, but leave bosses,” according to Lynda Ford...

The Bottom Line

According to Winning Workplaces, a nonprofit human resources consultancy in Evanston, Illinois (www.winningworkplaces.org), the cost of replacing an employee ranges from 50% to 150% of that employee’s annual salary. The cost for losing a veterinarian would probably cost a clinic at least \$50,000 in lost services, recruiting, hiring, training and all related costs. So, your goal is not only to hire a veterinarian that is a good fit for the organization but also to retain that person.

In *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave* (AMA-COM, 2005), Leigh Branham reports that nearly 90% of managers believe that employees leave or stay mostly for the money. While money is often offered as a reason for leaving because it is non-personal and non-confrontational, Branham lists the following factors as the real reasons for 90% of employee departures:

- Workplace not what the employee expected
- Mismatch between the person and the job
- Not enough feedback or coaching
- Too few growth and advancement opportunities
- Stress from overwork and work-life imbalance
- Loss of trust in top leaders

Much can be done to avoid some of the above by accurately describing the workplace, expectations and opportunities during the interview process and carefully evaluating how well the person fits the position.

“Employees join organizations, but leave bosses,” according to Lynda Ford, a human resource and management expert and author of *Transform Your Workplace* (McGraw-Hill 2005). Ford encourages you to “promote open communication and a workplace culture that values people’s ideas and includes their input in major decision-making.” This type of environment is extremely important to reducing turnover.

In the end, it all comes down to understanding that veterinarians must be viewed as highly skilled professionals with personal lives, bills to pay, career goals, a need to be respected, and a desire for personal satisfaction. If you look at the real advantages you have to offer, tailor your messages to your audience, and reach out with energy and enthusiasm, there is no reason why you shouldn’t be able to attract the top-notch surgeons you need.

High Quality, High Volume Spay/Neuter Task Force Participants

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|---------------------------------------|--|
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| Karla Brestle, DVM | Medical Director. Humane Alliance |
| Phil Busby, DVM; MS; DACVS | Professor of Humane Ethics and Animal Welfare. Mississippi State University |
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| Kelly Farrell, DVM | Senior Veterinarian. Angels of Assisi |
| Nancy Ferguson, DVM | Medical Director. Pets ALIVE Spay/Neuter Clinic |
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| Ellen Jefferson, DVM | Founder and Medical Director. Emancipet |
| Julie Levy, DVM; PhD; DACVIM | Associate Professor. University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine |
| Andrea Looney, DVM; DACVA | Senior Lecturer. Department of Pain Medicine & Anesthesiology, Cornell University Hospital for Animals, College of Veterinary Medicine |
| Michael Moyer, DVM | Rosenthal Director of Shelter Animal Medicine. University of Pennsylvania |
| Sandra Newbury, DVM | Koret Shelter Medicine Program, Center for Companion Animal Health, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine |
| David Sweeney, DVM | Chief of Staff. Big Fix, No More Homeless Pets in Utah |
| Kathy Tyson, DVM | Animal Shelter Veterinarian. City of San Jose Animal Care & Services |
| Adrie Voors, DVM | Staff Veterinarian. Shenandoah Valley Spay and Neuter Clinic |
| James Weedon, DVM, MPH, DACVPM | Executive Director. SNAP |
| Sara White, DVM | Executive Director. Spay ASAP, Inc. |
| Christine Wilford, DVM | President, Co-Founder. Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project |