

Massachusetts Veterinary Technician Association 2020 Survey

Summary: The Massachusetts Veterinary Technician Association (MVTA) is the credentialing body for Certified Veterinary Technicians (CVT) in Massachusetts. This is a voluntary credential with the current primary path to certification being graduation from an American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accredited program and passing the Veterinary Technician National Exam (VTNE). There does, at this time, exist alternate paths to certification. The MVTA designed a survey to collect data pertaining to membership in the MVTA and the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), as well as, the level of support for the goals of both the MVTA's legislative efforts and NAVTA's Veterinary Nurse Initiative (VNI). Responses were solicited from both MVTA members and non-members to be able to compare responses from both groups.

Methods: The online platform Survey Monkey was used to collect data. MVTA members were sent a link to the survey, along with their membership number. To solicit non-member responses, a link was posted to MVTA social media outlets and emailed to non-member addresses in the MVTA database. The survey was designed to identify members versus non-members. The survey was open from January 18-February 8, 2020. Data analysis was completed via Survey Monkey's resources. No advanced data analysis was pursued as the goal of this survey was to collect basic data. The MVTA realizes that this may slightly skew results, however, based on the insight provided through Survey Monkey, there seems to be minimal potential issues (most questions affected were with member versus non-members following incorrect skip logic).

Results: The survey garnered 603 responses, with 456 identifying as MVTA full members, meaning they are CVTs, and 147 as non-members.

MVTA membership

For the purposes of this survey, membership was considered being a CVT, credentialed through the MVTA. The MVTA does offer other membership categories but, for this purpose, it was important to solicit CVT input separate from other demographics.

The majority of respondents have been members for 1-10 years (1-5 years 28%, 6-10 years 23%). Twelve percent have been members for less than 1 year. For those who have been members for over 10 years, the distribution is fairly even for each 5-year increment (11-15 years, 16-20 years, 20+ year). Eighty-nine percent (363) reported working in Massachusetts.

The vast majority (89%) are currently practicing in the field as a CVT. Three percent are not working in the field and the remainder responded as working in some other part of veterinary medicine such as academia, research, and management.

The largest group of respondents have been in the field for 10 or fewer years with 20% each practicing for 0-5 years and 6-10 years. The second largest representation was those in the field for over 20 years (31%, 125).

MVTA non-members

Forty-six percent (67) of non-member respondents identified as credentialed veterinary technicians while 34% (55) identified as non-credentialed veterinary technicians (in Massachusetts this is a commonly used term). Other respondents included veterinary assistants, veterinary technology students, individuals not longer in the field, and one veterinarian.

Of those respondents who identified as non-members, 84% (122) reported never having been a member. Of the 24 who had been MVTA members at some time, 46% (11) reported they are no longer members because they are credentialed in another state. The second most common reason was not seeing a benefit in maintaining certification (17%, 4). Other reasons given, included simply forgetting to renew and retirement.

Sixty percent (87) respondents did not practice in Massachusetts, while 40% (58) are practicing in the state. The range of how long individuals have been in the field was fairly evenly split with the highest numbers practicing between 0-5 years (24%) and 20+ years (23%) and the lowest practicing 16-20 years (15%).

NAVTA membership

The NAVTA represents veterinary technicians throughout the United States. Their goal is to support state associations and amplify the states' voices to the national level. The MVTA thought it important to survey their membership to see if MVTA members were taking advantage of NAVTA membership.

It was found that 60% of MVTA member respondents were not current NAVTA members and 64% had never been NAVTA members. For those who reported having once been a member, it was asked why they were no longer a member. The top two reasons given were "too expensive" (35%) and "I don't see a benefit to keeping it up" (40%). Several individuals reported simply forgetting to renew as their reason in the "other" section.

MVTA and NAVTA goals

The MVTA has been pursuing mandatory credentialing for veterinary technicians in the state for several years. Massachusetts is only one of 13 states in the country that does not have some kind of mandatory credential process for veterinary technicians. The work of the MVTA is in line with NAVTA's Veterinary Nurse Initiative (VNI) which includes four goals: standardized credential requirements across the country, a defined scope of practice for veterinary technicians, title protection, and a standardized title in all states. The MVTA board felt it was important to determine how its membership felt about these goals to determine future

direction of the board's work. Roughly 400 of the 456 survey respondents participated in this portion of the survey.

It was found that 89% (357) of respondents support mandatory licensing of veterinary technicians in Massachusetts, 98% (394) were in favor of title protection, 92% (369) were in favor of a defined scope of practice, and 95% (381) were in favor of standardized credential requirements across all 50 states. When compared to these numbers, the results for non-members was somewhat lower but still showed a strong majority in support of each of these goals. Of the roughly 130 non-member respondents who answered these questions, 72% (94) supported mandatory licensing, 92% (120) supported title protection, 85% (109) supported a defined scope of practice, and 84% (109) supported standardized credential requirements.

When asked specifically about what title should be pursued, 82% (326) of member respondents supported the VNI proposed title of Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) while 73% of non-member respondents were in support. When the question was opened up to ask what would be their preferred title (RVN, CVT, LVT, RVT, other), 70% (280) of member respondents preferred the RVN title, with CVT and LVT each receiving 11% and RVT receiving 3%. In the "other" section the two most common responses were that there was no preference on the title and Licensed Veterinary Nurse. Fifty-seven percent of non-member respondents preferred RVN, with CVT and RVT receiving 13% each and LVT at 10%. The most common "other" answer was no preference to the title.

Conclusions: The main purposes of the survey were to gather demographics on current members, determine if there are opportunities to increase membership, and determine the current feelings on the major profession advancing initiatives happening both in the state and across the country.

Based on the breakdown of how long CVTs have been in the field, there is suggestion of a definite drop in those who have stayed in the field for those who began practicing between 10-20 years ago with those groups showing an average 14% in the field compared to 20% for 0-10 years and over 30% for over 20 years. This could be simply due to the 0-10 and over 20 groups seeing more value in sharing their input, but this would be an area to look at further. It is encouraging that 40% of respondents were in the field less than 10 years as it suggests these individuals are engaged in their profession and, hopefully, less likely to leave the field. Future surveys to see if the percentages even out would be helpful to continue to monitor trends of individuals leaving the field as is so commonly reported.

For those who identified as non-members, the majority still identified as being credentialed veterinary technicians, which indicates they must be credentialed in another state. This correlates with 60% of this group not practicing in Massachusetts. This indicates that these respondents would not have a need to be credentialed in Massachusetts and, as such, would not be a demographic for the MVTA to engage for membership. The one area noted as an opportunity for both MVTA and NAVTA membership are those that reported they forgot to

renew. It may be worth both organizations continue to review their processes for renewal reminders and reaching out to lapsed individuals to decrease the likelihood of members lapsing due to forgetfulness.

Finally, the MVTA board wanted to ensure their future work is directed by the preferences and beliefs of their membership. It was found that there were strong majorities for both the MVTA's work in pursuing mandatory licensing in the state and for all of NAVTA's VNI goals. While the MVTA is a member-based organization that primarily directs its work towards the will of its members, the board felt it important to know if its members' feelings would be in alignment with non-members. Based on the responses, it clearly shows that members and non-members are in agreement on mandatory licensing, title protection, scope of practice, and standardized credential requirements. Members (82%) and non-members (73%) showed support for the title of Registered Veterinary Nurse with preference for that title over others being in the majority for both groups (70% for members, 57% non-members).

The MVTA would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. The information from this survey will be used to formulate the direction and work of the MVTA in coming years.