



## Ways veterinary clinics can tackle labor shortages and build a stronger veterinary hospital workforce through upskilling and strategic support

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Staff shortages, burnout and the gap between graduate readiness and real-world expectations are reshaping how veterinary practices operate. To keep up, practices have adjusted with shortened hours, added tech tools such as online scheduling and investing in staff training. Enrolling staff in career-aligned programs to help expand internal capacity and improve retention is increasingly important.

When a clinic is understaffed, lines between roles get blurred. It's not uncommon to see veterinarians answering phones or credentialed technicians stepping into support roles that aren't aligned with their training. While these workflows may keep the practice running, they are not sustainable. A recent [NAVTA survey](#) shows that nearly half of respondents said there's little difference between the work of credentialed techs and uncredentialed staff. Only 36 percent felt they're being fully used in their roles. This misalignment not only affects morale, but it also limits how well a clinic can function.

According to the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#), teams that fully leverage each person's licensure scope are more efficient and see increased job satisfaction. Employee retention is especially critical in rural areas, where hiring is difficult and turnover can be destabilizing. Success in today's veterinary field requires more than technical training. The [emotional demands of the profession](#), supporting pet owners, facing loss and managing high caseloads all can take a toll.

"Confidence, communication skills and mentorship are just as important as clinical competence in today's veterinary practices."

Programs that focus on building soft skills alongside technical ones can make a real difference in preparing graduates for success. At Penn Foster, for example, training emphasizes technical skills, plus real-world competencies like prioritizing patient care, communicating clearly with teams, and navigating tough conversations. These types of changes in training and mindset are beginning to show results in the field.

To build a resilient veterinary workforce, practices must go beyond reactive staffing fixes. It requires investments in upskilling programs that align with clinical needs, establishing clear professional pathways, and fostering mentorship that supports long-term growth. Clinics that make these changes can invest in patient outcomes, improve efficiency and operate more effectively in a constrained labor market.

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Dr. Meghan Wells, DVM, MPH, serves as an instructor for the Veterinary Technology program at [Penn Foster](#), bringing a wealth of experience and education to her role. Dr. Wells holds an associate's degree in business administration from Harrisburg Area Community College, a bachelor's degree in veterinary medical technology from Wilson College, and a master's degree in public health from Virginia Tech. She earned her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, combining her passion for animal health and public health.

*Before becoming a veterinarian, Dr. Wells gained hands-on experience working as a veterinary technician and assistant in a variety of settings, including research, agriculture, and small animal clinics. This diverse background allowed her to care for animals of all sizes and build a deep understanding of patient care and the broader veterinary industry.*

*Today, Dr. Wells shares her expertise with aspiring veterinary professionals, leveraging her unique combination of clinical experience, academic achievements, and a passion for animal health to help shape the next generation of veterinary technicians.*