

# Veterinary Nurse interview questions

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## What to expect

Veterinary Nurse interviews mix clinical process checks with behavioural and scenario questions, since the role demands both technical competence and calm judgement with animals and worried owners. Expect the panel to probe how you handle pressure, hygiene protocols and difficult client conversations.

- **Process:** Walking through a clinical task step by step, such as preparing for surgery or handling specimens, to check you know correct sequence and safety standards.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about handling stress, mistakes or difficult clients, usually answered with a specific example.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations testing judgement under pressure, such as a deteriorating patient or an anxious owner.
- **Safety and hygiene:** Questions on infection control, sterilisation and medication handling given the clinical risk involved.
- **Client-facing:** Questions on communicating with pet owners, especially around bad news or non-compliance with treatment plans.

Most veterinary nursing interviews open with a few questions about your training and clinic experience, move into scenario and behavioural questions to assess judgement and temperament, then close with practical or technical checks (sometimes a short skills demonstration) and a chance for you to ask about the clinic's caseload and team structure.

## 1. Walk me through how you'd prepare a patient and theatre for a routine desexing surgery.

### Why they ask

Checks you understand correct surgical assisting sequence, sterilisation standards and anaesthesia safety checks without needing prompting.

### How to structure your answer

Describe each step in order: pre-op checks, equipment and autoclave preparation, patient prep, anaesthesia monitoring setup, and post-op handover.

### Example answer

*"I'd start with the pre-op checklist, confirming fasting status and consent forms, then run the autoclave cycle for instruments while the vet examines the patient. I clip and prep the surgical site, set up the anaesthesia machine and monitoring equipment, and position the patient. During surgery I monitor vital signs and assist as directed, then once finished I move the patient to recovery, record vitals at set intervals and brief the next nurse on aftercare instructions."*

## 2. Tell me about a time you noticed something wrong with a patient that wasn't immediately obvious.

### Why they ask

Tests clinical observation skills and willingness to escalate concerns appropriately, both critical to animal welfare.

### How to structure your answer

Use STAR: situation, task, action, result.

### Example answer

*"During a placement, I was monitoring a dog recovering from abdominal surgery. Its respiration rate crept up slightly over an hour, nothing dramatic, but outside the pattern I'd expect. I flagged it to the vet straight away rather than waiting for the next scheduled check. It turned out early internal bleeding was starting, and the quick catch meant they could intervene before it became critical."*

### **3. A client refuses to follow your vaccination advice for their puppy. How do you handle the conversation?**

#### **Why they ask**

Assesses client communication skills and how you balance advocacy for animal welfare with respecting owner decisions.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Explain the judgement calls you'd make in the moment: how you'd listen, inform and de-escalate, without dictating one rigid script.

#### **Example answer**

*"I'd first ask what's behind their hesitation, cost, past experience or something they've read, rather than assuming. Then I'd explain the specific risks for their puppy's breed and environment in plain terms, and offer options like a modified schedule if that's clinically appropriate. If they still decline, I'd document the conversation and make sure the vet is aware, but I wouldn't pressure them further once they've made an informed choice."*

### **4. How do you stay on top of infection control when moving between patients during a busy shift?**

#### **Why they ask**

Directly probes hygiene discipline given the clinical risk of cross-contamination in a fast-paced clinic.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Describe your standard routine and how you adapt it under time pressure.

#### **Example answer**

*"I follow a consistent hand hygiene and glove-change routine between every patient, and I clean and disinfect surfaces and equipment straight after use rather than batching it for later. On busy days I keep supplies like gloves and wipes stocked at each station so there's no excuse to skip a step because something's out of reach."*

### **5. You're the only nurse on the floor and two patients need attention at once, one is a stable but distressed cat, the other is a dog showing signs of shock. What do you do?**

#### **Why they ask**

A scenario question testing triage judgement and prioritisation under pressure, common in busy clinic settings.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Walk through your decision-making process and reasoning for prioritisation, not just the final answer.

#### **Example answer**

*"I'd prioritise the dog showing signs of shock immediately, since that's a life-threatening presentation, and call for backup or alert the vet while I start initial stabilisation steps like checking airway and starting fluids if directed. The distressed cat is uncomfortable but stable, so I'd calm it as best I could, maybe moving it somewhere quieter, and get to it properly once the more urgent case is handled or another staff member is free."*

## **6. What made you choose veterinary nursing, and how do you handle the emotional side of the job, such as euthanasia?**

### **Why they ask**

Behavioural question checking resilience and genuine motivation, since burnout and compassion fatigue are common in this field.

### **How to structure your answer**

Personal reflection with a specific example showing how you process difficult moments professionally.

### **Example answer**

*"I chose this career because I like combining clinical work with direct animal care, not just lab work. Euthanasia is the hardest part. I focus on making the process calm and dignified for the animal and the owner in the moment, and I've learned to debrief with colleagues afterward rather than carrying it home unprocessed. It's part of the job I take seriously rather than getting used to."*