

Veterinarian	Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2347-11	June 2009
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

There are 7700 veterinarians employed in Australia and 84 per cent are employed in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Of those, the vast majority are employed in the veterinary services industry. ABS Labour Force Survey data show average annual growth of approximately 15 per cent over the past five years however over the year to February 2009 the same data show the number of veterinarians employed has stabilised.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the majority of vacancies surveyed for this report were to replace existing positions and not due to an increase in a demand for services.

Occupational supply

Veterinarians are required to hold a minimum of a Bachelor qualification and accredited courses are available in all States except Tasmania, Northern Territory and the ACT. Over the five years to 2007, an average of 310 graduates completed relevant degrees. New courses have been established at Charles Sturt University (2005), University of Adelaide (2008) and James Cook University (2006). These courses should contribute to an increase in graduates over 2010 - 2013. Veterinarians practicing in Australia are required to register with the Veterinary Surgeons Board or Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of each State or Territory in which the veterinarian intends to practice. Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) data indicate net migration contributed 22 veterinarians in 2007-08. The previous two years each recorded negative net migration.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market.

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for veterinarians was undertaken for this report. As vacancies were difficult to source in some states, a number of employers were cold canvassed.

Overall, employers filled 38 per cent of vacancies within six weeks of advertising. There was an average of three applicants per vacancy with 1.6 applicants per vacancy being considered by employers to be suitable. Unsuitable applicants generally lacked relevant experience or were overseas applicants with issues relating to their qualifications or visa requirements. Two thirds of employers were looking for experienced veterinarians with a minimum of two years experience. More than half of the surveyed vacancies were replacement positions.

Just over half of metropolitan vacancies were filled. The unfilled vacancies were predominantly seeking small animal veterinarians. Two thirds of the unfilled metropolitan positions were in Sydney and Perth.

Almost 30 per cent of regional vacancies were filled. The unfilled vacancies were seeking mixed practice and large animal or equine vets. Feedback from employers indicated that regional veterinary practices experienced more difficulty filling vacancies than those in metropolitan locations. Regional employers suggested the expectation of longer working hours and the remote locations contributed to the shortage of applicants for rural positions. They also commented that they continue to need veterinarians with large animal skills and that there is a need for incentives to attract graduates to large animal work and regional locations. Regional employers in some states are optimistic that the new veterinary courses on offer in South Australia, New South Wales and North Queensland will increase the number of graduates interested in regional work with the first group of graduates in 2010.

Labour market outlook

Shortages of veterinarians are likely to persist in the medium term.