

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Academic Year:	2026-2027
Credential:	College Certificate
Program Delivery:	Full-Time
Duration:	1 Year
Length:	2 Semesters
Program Code(s)	H057 - Haileybury Campus (HL)

DESCRIPTION

This one-year Ontario College Certificate program prepares students with the essential knowledge and hands-on skills required to work as Veterinary Assistants in clinical and animal-care settings. Aligned with current professional standards, the program focuses on animal handling and restraint, basic animal care, and effective client communication.

Students will learn foundational skills in animal health and husbandry, including how to assist with routine procedures, maintain clean and safe environments, and support the daily operations of a veterinary practice. The curriculum also introduces students to key concepts in animal behaviour, preparing them to recognize signs of stress or illness and contribute to a calm, safe experience for both animals and clients.

Graduates will be equipped to support veterinarians and veterinary technicians in tasks such as patient preparation, monitoring, and care. Whether working in veterinary clinics, animal shelters, or rescue organizations, students will be ready to contribute to the health and well-being of animals in a variety of professional settings.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Graduates may find employment in veterinary practices, federal and provincial institutions, universities, humane societies, pet food outlets, veterinary companies, grooming facilities and kennels.

VOCATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Competently conduct veterinary office and hospital procedures related to client reception and customer service, patient admission, record-keeping and billing, and basic cleanliness and orderliness of a veterinary facility.
2. Interact and communicate effectively, professionally, and ethically with clients and other members of the veterinary health team, and with an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of that team.
3. Assist with veterinary pharmacy-related tasks that are within the scope of duties of a veterinary assistant, including recognizing general types and groups of drugs, as well as the legal issues involving all drugs; competently filling medications and maintaining inventories while safely dealing with hazardous waste; and supporting animal vaccinations.
4. Conduct basic examination room procedures including restraining animal patients, recording basic vital signs, taking accurate history, identifying breeds and sex, providing exam room grooming, applying ear and eye medication, as well as being familiar with small animal nutritional requirements.
5. Provide animal nursing in a safe and professional manner within the scope of duties of a veterinary assistant.

6. Assist in performing surgical preparations and maintaining facility and equipment cleanliness, within the scope of the duties of a veterinary assistant.
7. Provide assistance to laboratory procedures and record keeping, within the scope of duties of a veterinary assistant.
8. Provide assistance with radiology and ultrasound imaging, within the scope of duties of a veterinary assistant.

PROGRAM COURSES

The following reflects the planned course sequence for full-time offerings of the program. Programs at Northern College are delivered using a variety of instruction modes. Courses may be offered in the classroom or lab, entirely online, or in a hybrid mode which combines classroom sessions with virtual learning activities.

Semester 1		Hours
AG1013	Grooming the Companion Animal	42
GN1011	Employment Preparation	14
GN1083	Managing for Success	42
VA1022	Animal Structure and Function	28
VA1033	Clinical Procedures	42
VA1042	Animal Behaviour Study	28
VA1043	Client Relations	42
VA2022	Large Animal Studies	28
VA2042	Animal Handling	28
VA2062	Laboratory Skills	28
VT1011	Kennel Duty 1	14
Semester 2		
GN1443	Indigenous Culture and Awareness	4
VA2011	Vet Assistant Field Placement	80
VA2021	Vet Assistant Math	14
VA2031	Shelter Medicine	14
VA2032	Feeds and Feeding of Companion Animals	28
VA2052	Basic Animal Procedures	28
VA2053	Coat and Skin Care	42
VA2063	Veterinary Hospital Management	28
VA2072	Basic Anatomy and Physiology	28
VT2011	Kennel Duty II	14
VT2042	Management Technology	28

PROGRAM PROGRESSION

The following reflects the planned progression for full-time offerings of the program.

Fall Intake

Sem 1: Fall 2026

Sem 2: Winter 2027

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Grade 12 English (C, U)
- Grade 11 Biology (C, U)
- Or equivalent

Graduates from a Veterinary Assistant or Animal Grooming program, in addition to the usual requirements for direct entry from high school – require a minimum GPA of 3.0 upon graduation.

Academic prerequisites for this program may be obtained free of charge through [Academic Upgrading](#).

Applicants who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and will have reached the age of 19 years on or before the start of the program must undergo academic testing and may be required to complete [Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition \(PLAR\)](#) process to demonstrate equivalency of admission requirements prior to admission into a program.

For more details, please contact the Admissions Office at 705-235-7222 or admissions@northern.on.ca.

Additional Requirements for International Students

In addition to the admission requirements, international students must have proof of [English Proficiency](#) and meet the requirements below.

1. Proof of Senior High School Diploma/Certificate
2. English Proficiency (we will require one of the following):
 - IELTS Academic International English Language Testing System: a minimum overall score of 6.0 must be achieved with no individual band score under 5.5
 - TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) – Computer-based overall minimum score of 79
 - PTE (Pearson Test of English) Academic – Graduate Diploma: 58+
 - Duolingo: 105+
3. CO-OP Work Permit is mandatory for this program to participate in unpaid program placements.

If your country of citizenship has English as its official language, we may accept alternate proof of English Proficiency. All educational documents must be submitted in English and will be dependent on the country of citizenship. For more information, please contact admissions@northern.on.ca.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Refer to the program page for [Veterinary Assistant Program Requirements](#) documentation.

- Proficiency in word processing recommended
- Rabies vaccine series or titre prior to start of program (at student's expense). The rabies vaccinations/titre should be started in May or June, and proof is due by August 1.
- Some experience in a veterinary clinic or hospital is considered an asset

Graduate with a Double Certificate: This program may be taken concurrently with the Animal Grooming program. The student would then graduate with a double certificate. Please contact the Program Assistant at 705-672-3376 ext. 8854 or at vetsciences@northern.on.ca for more information.

Information for Graduates: A limited number of spots are available in our [Veterinary Technician/Technology](#) program for graduates of Northern College's Veterinary Assistant program. Graduates of this program that wish to apply to the Veterinary Technician program must have – in addition to the usual requirements for direct entry from high school – a 75 percent minimum average (3.0 GPA) upon graduation from Veterinary Assistant program. Applicants will be assessed according to highest academic achievement in their program. Please contact the Program Assistant at 705-672-3376 ext. 8854 or at vetsciences@northern.on.ca for more information.

Work Integrated Learning Opportunities

The Veterinary Assistant program includes a hands-on field placement in a veterinary or animal care facility. This placement gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting, gaining experience in animal handling, client communication, and day-to-day clinic operations. Work-integrated learning helps students build practical skills, gain insight into the profession, and make valuable connections within the animal care industry.

Articulation / Transfer Agreements

A number of articulation agreements have been negotiated with universities and other institutions across Canada, North America and internationally. These agreements are assessed, revised and updated on a regular basis. Please contact the program coordinator for specific details if you are interested in pursuing such an option. Additional information can be found at [Articulation Agreements](#).

Accreditation

The Veterinary Science Centre and our [Veterinary Technician](#) program are accredited by:



CANADIAN VETERINARY
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES MÉDECINS VÉTÉRINAIRES



ONTARIO
ASSOCIATION OF
VETERINARY
TECHNICIANS



GAP – Good Animal Practices®
Bonnes pratiques animales – BPA®

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 19 Program Courses
- 3 General Education Courses

Graduation Eligibility

To graduate from this program, a student must attain a minimum of 60% or a letter grade of CR (Credit) in each course in each semester unless otherwise stated on the course outline. Students should consult departmental policies and manuals for additional details and exceptions.

Graduation Window

Students unable to adhere to the program duration of one year (as stated above) may take a maximum of two years to complete their credential. After this time, students must be re-admitted into the program and follow the curriculum in place at the time of re-admission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about being admitted into the program, please contact Northern College Admissions at admissions@northern.on.ca or by phone at 705-235-3211 ext. 7222. For questions about the content of the program, contact the Program Coordinator.

Kellie Broderick
Program Assistant, School of Veterinary Sciences
Tel: 705-672-3376 ext. 8854
Email: yetsciences@northern.on.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester 1

AG1013 Grooming the Companion Animal

This course will educate students on how to handle and care for various companion animals, both large and small. This course will also prepare the student to work proficiently in a grooming facility. The student will learn and practise proper bathing procedures. The student will also be able to recognize and care for skin and coat conditions and will learn proper ear and nail care. They will also learn how to communicate effectively with their clients.

GN1011 Employment Preparation

This course will enable the students to become familiar with specific employment requirements for their field of interest. The students will also have the opportunity to learn how to self-market for job finding, as well as how to maximize their potential for success in an interview situation. This course is designed to assist students in obtaining employment. Students will also learn to prepare themselves for varied Fieldwork Placements. This semester will concentrate on incorporating skills from the Client Relations Course to further develop their interpersonal communication skills through their ability to prepare for an employment interview. The course will also discuss work ethics and the role they play in long-term employability.

GN1083 Managing for Success

The course is designed to help students gain insights and skills to promote personal and professional development. Students will develop an understanding of how they manage their lives and incorporate skills to maximize their strengths and reduce the impact of less effective techniques. Students will learn about resources that are available to them and the intelligence of accessing additional support when needed. The content of this course provides students with the opportunity to lay a foundation for lifelong learning; learn to communicate effectively, build and value productive and satisfying diverse relationships and prepare for the challenges and rewards that make life meaningful.

VA1022 Animal Structure and Function

This is the first of two courses designed to teach the student the basics of anatomy and physiology. The levels of organization within the body will be discussed. The function of body organs and systems will be described and related to the common diseases the student may encounter in a clinical environment. Students will learn appropriate directional and anatomical terminology as well as terminology related to common medical conditions. This course focuses on the structure and function of the dog and cat.

VA1033 Clinical Procedures

This course deals with animal husbandry. The student will learn to assist with restraint of companion animals. Emergency Triage will be covered, as well as patient admittance into a Veterinary hospital and discharge. Pharmacology will be covered in this course. The assistant must be proficient in recognizing legal issues involving drugs in the workplace, recognize general types and groups of drugs and describe prescription label requirements. Labelling, packaging and dispensing of prescription medication will also be covered. Biological therapeutic agents will be discussed.

VA1042 Animal Behaviour Study

Animal care providers often handle animals with behaviour problems. They must know what advice to give and when to refer the problem to the veterinarian. The animal care provider must also know the procedure involved in referral to a behavioural specialist and/or obedience trainer.

VA1043 Client Relations

This one semester course is designed for the Animal Grooming, Veterinary Assistant, Veterinary Technician and the Veterinary Technology programs. The course is designed to look at their role in the daily operation of a veterinary practice. The course will include sections on customer service, telephone skills, and welcoming skills, confrontation and conflict resolution. The course will assist students in becoming more comfortable assisting clients through the grief cycle. There will be a component on Client Communication utilizing both oral and written communication in the veterinary practice. This course will have a self-directed online grammar component. This course will enable the students to practice the skills required for effective work in client relations.

VA2022 Large Animal Studies

This course will deal with the general needs of large animal veterinary practice. The veterinary assistant will develop an appreciation for livestock medical and surgical techniques, and commonly encountered conditions. The student will acquire a general understanding of clinical procedures, bandaging, reproduction, biosecurity, animal handling and restraint. Proper sample collection and animal identification for official certificates will be reviewed. The student will also become familiar with the general clinical examination of equine and ruminant species. Particular emphasis will be placed on preparing the student for interaction with large animal clients.

VA2042 Animal Handling

This course will outline the fundamentals of animal restraint and the factors that influence behaviour. Handling, restraining, feeding, and analyzing cats, dogs and lab animals will be emphasized. Proper forms of animal approach, handling, restraint, and release will be demonstrated and practiced by the student. All classes will start with a lecture and/or demonstration on how to perform the procedure, followed by a lab for applying that knowledge.

VA2062 Laboratory Skills

This course will commence the student's study of the basic components of the veterinary lab. The veterinary assistant must develop competency in applying safety procedures, practicing aseptic techniques, ensuring quality control and preparing samples for analysis when assisting other members of the veterinary team.

VT1011 Kennel Duty 1

This course will prepare the student to function in a veterinary environment. Students will provide care for the animals owned by Northern College. The use of Standard Operating Procedures will assist the student. The Veterinary Science facility simulates the professional environment and enables the students to learn the skills necessary to function as a productive team member.

Semester 2**GN1443 Indigenous Culture and Awareness**

This general education course will provide students with an introduction to Canadian Indigenous Nations' history, sovereignty, land titles, cultural history and current critical issues. Topics addressed include the content of Indigenous rights, economic and social development, community and political processes, and business law and policies, justice & social services. Canadian Indigenous History and Relations is a general education course that has been incorporated into all programs at Northern College.

VA2011 Vet Assistant Field Placement

Students will be expected to spend 80 hours at the clinic where they have arranged placement. The clinic must be able to provide the necessary work experiences. Students will perform the duties regularly expected of a student with the knowledge and skills taught in the one-year Veterinary Assistant program. The placement will give students the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge and skills learnt at the college via a (typically) two-week experience supporting the DVMs, RVTs and other staff working in a veterinary clinic. The prerequisites for this course are all other Veterinary Assistant courses.

VA2021 Vet Assistant Math

This course provides a review of basic mathematics as well as a range of mathematical skills to aid the student in problem solving, conversions, and understanding basic mathematical tasks seen regularly as a veterinary assistant. The student will gain a deeper understanding of many applied mathematical calculations including dosage calculations (used in the administration of medications) and basic business calculations (used in reception tasks and business owner tasks).

VA2031 Shelter Medicine

The course will cover the fundamental concepts of shelter medicine, including the importance of the 5 Freedoms, proper training of volunteers and the creation, following and revision of standard operating procedures. The course discusses a number of very important concepts that will help to maintain the physical and mental well-being of the animals within a shelter's environment including: sanitation procedures and cleaning rotations, enrichment, daily rounds, an appropriate length of stay and a shelter's capacity for care, community outreach, trap-neuter release programs, and public education. At the successful completion of this course the student will have an introductory understanding of animal shelter environments.

VA2032 Feeds and Feeding of Companion Animals

This course covers the basic concepts of nutrition and provides students with sufficient understanding to advise clients on the nutritional needs of large and small animals at various life stages. While the major focus of the course is on feeding the healthy animal, the dietary needs of dogs and cats with specific organ diseases are also covered. Students are introduced to common dietary toxicities and deficiencies encountered in small animal companion medicine.

VA2052 Basic Animal Procedures

This course will outline the fundamentals of basic animal procedures that may occur in a small animal clinic setting. Handling and restraining will be emphasized during basic procedures such as; bandaging, emergency triage, proper sample collection and handling, equipment uses during emergency situations. All classes will start with a lecture and/or demonstration on how to perform the procedure, followed by a lab for applying that knowledge.

VA2053 Coat and Skin Care

This course will encompass all aspects of grooming procedures for the companion animal. It will prepare the student to recognize and care for various skin disorders. All areas of concern will be discussed and practised in providing a safe environment for the groomer, workplace and the companion animal.

VA2063 Veterinary Hospital Management

This course orients veterinary technicians/assistant to practice management with emphasis on marketing, communications, business operations, inventory control, scheduling, standard operating procedures, maintenance and retrieval of records, and occupational health and safety issues. By understanding the legalities that impact on veterinary practice, while at the same time appreciating the need to conserve costs and increase practice income, the graduating technician will be better prepared to contribute to the effective operation of the practice. The student will be expected to apply communication skills developed in the Client Relations course.

VA2072 Basic Anatomy and Physiology

This is the second of two courses designed to teach the student the basics of anatomy and physiology. The levels of organization within the body will be discussed. The function of body organs and systems will be described and related to the common diseases the student may encounter in a clinical setting. Students will learn appropriate directional and anatomical terminology as well as terminology related to common medical conditions. This course focuses on the structure and function of canine and feline species.

VT2011 Kennel Duty II

This course will prepare the student to function in a veterinary environment. Students will provide care for the animals owned by Northern College. The use of Standard Operating Procedures will assist the student. The Veterinary Science facility simulates the professional environment and enables the students to learn the skills necessary to function as a productive team member.

VT2042 Management Technology

This course will give the student practical skills on specialized veterinary software packages such as Pulse (a "cloud-based" software-as-a-service solution you can access from anywhere via a web browser), and AVImark (a popular software used in veterinary office clinics which is installed on our on-campus computer lab workstations). Students will learn to set up files for new clients and/or new patients, bill clients for services and products, print appropriate certificates and prescription labels, as well as practice accepting payments.

