

What makes vets feel good at work?

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Credit: University of Adelaide

Receiving a simple thank you, spending time with peers and further developing their expertise, are all factors that make veterinarians feel good at work, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Adelaide.

In the study published by Vet Record, researchers investigated the positive side of veterinary work and specifically what brings vets pleasure in their job.

Lead author Madeleine Clise, a psychologist and Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Adelaide's School of Psychology says: "At a time in Australia when there are national shortages of vets, particularly in regional areas, and increased publicity about the risks and challenges in the profession, it's important to focus on what can be done to retain those in the profession and attract more people to the field.

"By focusing on what contributes to vets experiencing [positive emotions](#), we can better understand how to improve wellbeing of those who care for our beloved pets, livestock and wildlife."

In a questionnaire completed by 273 Australian veterinarians, participants were asked to provide up to 10 responses to the prompt, 'I derive pleasure from my work as a [veterinarian](#) when...'. Over 2500 responses were grouped into themes and sub-themes and categorised using the 'Job Demands-Resources Model', which focuses on both the positive and negative aspects of a job that are indicative of employee wellbeing.

"The results highlight that there is an abundance of factors related to pleasure at work for veterinarians, above and beyond working with and helping animals," Ms Clise said.

"In fact, [positive relationships](#) between clients and vets, and vets and their colleagues, was a more frequent response than positive relationships with animals.

"Vets, just like all of us, feel good when they are shown trust and respect. And a simple 'thank you' goes a long way."

Other findings from the study suggest that having opportunities to use and develop their specialised skillsets is highly pleasurable for veterinarians in practice. A positive workplace culture, successful outcomes with patients and opportunities to collaborate with other vets were also highlighted.

Senior author Dr. Michelle McArthur, Associate Professor at the University of Adelaide's School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, says: "Managers and practice managers can use the results to enhance the [work environment](#) for employees.

"This could include introducing an informal and formal recognition system and increasing time spent with colleagues.

"Further beneficial changes could include the introduction of a peer supervision or mentoring program to support veterinary expertise and increase connectedness across the profession."

The results also showed experiencing certain positive beliefs about oneself, such as flexibility, having a [positive attitude](#) and accomplishment are associated with pleasure at work.

"So further developing personal resources, for example in the university curriculum or as ongoing professional development, could increase the overall wellbeing of veterinarians," said Dr. McArthur.

The researchers hope the results will spark discussion and further focus on the positive aspects of veterinary work, which they say are often overshadowed by the negative.

"Veterinarian work is such a rewarding profession and it's important that we share the many positives with new veterinarians and those in training as reassurance, and to encourage others to join the profession," said Dr.

McArthur.

More information: Madeleine H. Clise et al, Sources of pleasure in veterinary work: A qualitative study, *Veterinary Record* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/vetr.54](https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.54) Madeleine H. Clise et al, Sources of pleasure in veterinary work: A qualitative study, *Veterinary Record* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/vetr.54](https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.54)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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