

VNCA Day One Competency Standards 2019

Presented by: VNCA Professional Advancement Committee

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INTRODUCTION

- a. Licence to practise qualifications leading to entry onto the Veterinary Nurse Register must articulate with the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing and be specified, recorded and assessed in a format that is readily auditable and accessible to learners.
- b. The Day One Skills list is a regulatory benchmark of essential clinical skills based on the VNCA Day One Competency Standards for Veterinary Nursing. The skills list is to be embedded in an electronic nursing progress log (the NPL) which has been designed to support a process of clinical mentorship and learning in addition to recording competence achievement. The skills list can be found here www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/files/AVNAT/Templates/Skills_Assessment.pdf
- c. The Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing are in relation to the care of horses (or other equidae), small animals, which should include dogs, cats and exotic species, and/or a combination of the four.
- d. The VNCA Code of Professional Conduct sets out the professional responsibilities for veterinary nurses. Where applicable, the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing have been referenced to the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice* and the relevant supporting guidance as it is developed, which should be referred to by student veterinary nurses when completing the skills.
- e. The references for the collation of this document include:
 - Animal Care and Management Training Package – Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing
 - RCVS Day One Competencies
 - NZVNA draft Day One Competencies

This document has been reviewed by the VNCA Board of Directors and the National Industry Advisory Group (NIAG) for Veterinary Nursing.

VNCA Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing – Small Animal

SECTION 1: LEGISLATION, LAWS AND ETHICS AFFECTING PRACTICE

Relevant Day One Competencies:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislation, laws and ethics related to a veterinary practice business.
2. Promote, monitor and maintain health and safety in the veterinary setting; demonstrate knowledge of systems of quality assurance; apply principles of risk management to their practice.
3. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including observing appropriate health and safety recommendations.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Apply legislation, laws and codes to scenarios for a wide range of legal and ethical responsibilities that encompass their work	Comply with legislative requirements such as Acts and any relevant codes relating to the following must be covered: Veterinary Surgeons Acts; Health and Safety; Biosecurity; Veterinary Medicines; Misuse of Drugs; Radiation Safety; Animal Welfare; Privacy; Dangerous Dogs Act At all times, the most up-to-date version of any relevant act must be used. Must include Codes of Welfare; VSB Veterinary Code of Conduct; VNCA Code of Conduct; Charting, medical records, recording and reporting https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
2 Comply with health and safety requirements and local risk factors	https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
3 Follow standard operating procedures and manufacturer guidelines when using equipment and materials	https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
4 Take appropriate action and report injury to self or others	https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
5 Carry out a risk assessment for one area of the practice and instigate appropriate action	https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
6 Comply with the requirements for reporting notifiable diseases and reportable diseases and injuries under DPI guidelines, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, as well as the AUSVETPLAN	Professional discussion in relation to notifiable diseases and reporting is an acceptable assessment method for this skill https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/our-publications/ausvetplan-manuals-and-documents/

SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION

Relevant Day One Competencies:

4. Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned.
5. Prepare accurate clinical and client records and laboratory reports, when necessary, in a form satisfactory to colleagues and understandable by the public.
6. Work effectively as a member of a multidisciplinary team in the delivery of services.
7. Understand the economic and emotional context in which the practice and the veterinary nurse operate.
8. Be able to review and evaluate literature and presentations critically.
9. Understand and apply principles of clinical governance and practise evidence-based veterinary nursing.
10. Demonstrate ability to cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies and adapt to change.
11. Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral and diagnostic services, ensuring they receive an appropriate history from the veterinary surgeon.
12. Understand the appropriate need for euthanasia; sensitively support the owner and others with due regard for health and safety of those present; advise on disposal of the cadaver.
13. Advise clients on programs of preventative medicine appropriate to species.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Communicate effectively using a variety of different methods	Communicate with clients, work colleagues, other veterinary professionals and the public Communication models should be followed where applicable
2 Create accurate and legible written communications according to practice policy	Records to include: patient records and reports, laboratory reports, admission and consent forms, client home care plans and instructions
3 Access and store client and practice records according to practice policy and data protection laws	
4 Admit patients	Obtain written and verbal informed consent, respond appropriately to economic status of clients to include insurance and practice policy charity referrals
5 Conduct effective nursing consultations	History taking and appropriate examination, identifying patients for referral to a veterinary surgeon, application of treatments, programs of preventative medicine e.g. weight, nutrition, dental consultations

		Implant a microchip in line with state legislation
6	Provide discharge information and guidance to owners	Advise clients on safe and correct routes of administration and potential side effects of drugs Demonstrate to clients safe techniques for administering medication; advise clients on the storage and disposal of medication, wound care advice, bandage advice, nutrition
7	Complete appropriate paperwork for referral and diagnostic services	To include laboratory samples, clinical histories and genetic tests
8	Practise evidence-based nursing	Appraise literature, discuss findings with practice team
9	Collaborate with inter-professional colleagues to improve professional practice and relationships	Ability to communicate, collaborate and debrief across a broad range of professional and para-professionals through varied discussions on, not limited to: unexpected medical or surgical events, serious complaint, accident or anaesthetic death, mitigating circumstances, breakdown in teamwork
10	Communicate effectively expressing appropriate empathy and sympathy	Prepare the owner for loss, support the owner through the euthanasia process, provide follow-up support for a bereaved owner, maintain and adapt professional approach to the circumstances
11	Communicate with professionalism and personal effectiveness	Identify unexpected or unfamiliar situations and propose a solution Recognise current personal limitations, the limitations of others and understand the consequences if limits are exceeded Identify the importance of continuing education Identify the economic and emotional contexts of a veterinary practice Explain the importance of evidence-based practice

SECTION 3: HANDLING AND RESTRAINT

Relevant Day One Competencies:

14. Handle and restrain animal patients safely and humanely, and instruct others in helping the veterinary surgeon perform these techniques.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Identify behavioural and environmental factors when approaching and handling animals	<p>Recognition of and minimising fear and distress, includes:</p> <p>Consider animal welfare and low stress handling techniques in a range of situations</p> <p>Species: dog, cat, rabbit, exotics, bird, cattle, sheep, horse</p> <p>Consider case-specific (e.g. if injured), species-specific factors</p>
2 Transport, lead and move animals using approved equipment, manual handling and lifting procedures	<p>Consider animal welfare and low stress handling techniques in a range of situations</p> <p>Species: dog, cat, rabbit, exotics, bird, cattle, sheep, horse</p>
3 Select and wear appropriate personal protective equipment	<p>Comply with legislative requirements such as:</p> <p>Acts and any relevant codes relating to health and safety</p>
4 Use appropriate restraint methods suitable for the patient and situation with due consideration for animal welfare	<p>Consider animal welfare and low stress handling techniques in a range of situations Species: dog, cat, rabbit, exotics, bird, cattle, sheep, horse</p> <p>Maintain patient's emotional homeostasis and wellbeing; recognise signs of distress and act accordingly to minimise this; restrain for clinical examination, sample collection, administration of medicines and introduction of an appropriate airway management device</p>

SECTION 4: NURSING CARE/HUSBANDRY

Relevant Day One Competencies:

15. Deliver nursing care and husbandry techniques in accordance with best practice and due regard to animal welfare.
16. Carry out appropriate care plans and administer care in the interests of the patients and with regard to the resources available.
17. Administer emergency first aid and assist with the provision of emergency treatment to animals.
18. Be aware of suspected adverse reactions to medications and alert the veterinary surgeon.
19. Assess pain and alert the veterinary surgeon.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Use an appropriate care plan model to deliver nursing care for a range of disorders and diseases	Carry out appropriate nursing care plans and interventions
2 Carry out a nursing assessment ascertaining information about the patient's normal routine	Food and fluid intake; urination and defecation; behaviour (response to pain, strangers, commands, etc.); mobility; sleep and rest; maintain your own hygiene levels
3 Perform a clinical examination and record findings	To include temperature, pulse, respiration, weight and capillary refill times/mucous membranes, hydration assessment
4 Provide husbandry to a range of species within a veterinary setting: accommodation, nutrition and excretions	<p>Legislation relevant to the veterinary industry, including but not limited to Health and Safety at Work Act, Animal Welfare Act, including codes of welfare, Veterinary Surgeons Acts in each state, and the VNCA, VSB and AVA Codes of Conduct</p> <p>Consider age, species, condition, demeanour and enrichment</p> <p>Undertake a nutritional assessment according to AVA and WSAVA guidelines https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544</p> <p>Calculate food requirements based on disease and life stage/lifestyle; manage assisted feeding to include hand feeding, oral hydration and managing and maintaining assisted feeding tubes</p> <p>Groom and bathe patients according to their needs</p>
5 Assess, monitor, manage and report the status of wounds	To include application of dressings appropriate to the type of wound, species and condition

6	Administer medicines prescribed by the veterinary surgeon in accordance with instructions from the manufacturer	To include oral, topical, subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous appropriate to the species
7	Monitor for adverse medication reactions and alert veterinary surgeon	Understand the medications used in the practice and the potential adverse actions applicable (refer to MIMMS)
8	Provide fluid therapy to in-patients and patients on property or farm as advised by the veterinary surgeon	Select appropriate fluids according to veterinary surgeon instructions; select and prepare administration equipment; place intravenous catheters into appropriate veins; intravenous catheter management; calculate amount and rate of fluid to administer; observe and monitor patients receiving fluids
9	Assess pain and alert the veterinary surgeon	Score and evaluate pain using a validated system, intensity of pain and associated anxiety and behaviour (see WSAVA Pain Council guidelines)
10	Perform basic physical therapy techniques to aid mobilisation	
11	Administer first aid for a range of situations within the limits of law and the expertise of the nurse	
12	Assist with a range of emergency care techniques	

SECTION 5: LABORATORY TECHNIQUES

Relevant Day One Competencies:

20. Collect, preserve and transport samples, prepare appropriate diagnostic tests, understand the limitations of the test results and identify the significance of the results.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Discuss with the veterinary surgeon and prepare for an appropriate sampling strategy	Strategy to include: personal protective equipment (PPE); clipping and preparing sample site; preparation of patient and equipment; calibration of equipment Strategies prepared for: blood, urine, faeces, skin/hair and tissue biopsies
2 Take appropriate samples	Samples to include: blood, urine, faeces, skin, hair pluck, bacterial swabs, milk
3 Carry out haematological analysis	To include: biochemistry, haematology, packed cell volume, total solids and smear
4 Assist with postmortems	To include: selection of equipment, PPE, sample collection area and support of veterinarian
5 Carry out urinalysis	To include: specific gravity, chemical analysis and prepare sediment analysis
6 Carry out faecal analysis	May include: gross visual analysis, microscopic analysis, quantitative examination, Baermann technique or commercial test kits
7 Carry out skin and hair analysis	May include: hair pluck, tape strips and coat brushings, skin scrape
8 Use a microscope	To include: low magnification, high magnification and oil immersion, appropriate maintenance routines, record vernier scale readings
9 Prepare samples for external analysis	To include: accurate completion of documentation, correct packaging and labelling, correct preservation and storage
10 Record laboratory test results and communicate accurately to the appropriate clinician	

SECTION 6: DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

Relevant Day One Competencies:

21. Prepare and conduct diagnostic imaging and other techniques carrying out the procedure in accordance with good health and safety and current regulations.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Prepare and use radiography equipment to produce a diagnostic image	To include: selection and set up of equipment, support during the procedure, cleaning and maintenance
2 Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and radiation monitoring equipment in accordance with legislation and codes of practice	Legislation relevant to veterinary industry, including but not limited to Workplace Health and Safety Acts, Animal Welfare Act, including codes of welfare, Radiation Code of Practice, Veterinary Surgeons Act in each state, may include the VNCA, VSB and AVA Codes of Conduct https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
3 Position a patient to obtain a diagnostic image of the area of interest	A variety of species and positions would be expected
4 Process images according to practice procedure	May include chemical or digital processing equipment
5 Record exposures and results of images according to practice procedure	Appraise the quality of the image for processing faults, factor settings, artefacts and take corrective actions, etc.
6 Prepare and support animals during endoscopy investigation	To include: selection and set up of equipment, support during the procedure, cleaning and maintenance
7 Prepare and support animals during ultrasound investigation	To include: selection and set up of equipment, support during the procedure, cleaning and maintenance

SECTION 7: PHARMACOLOGY AND DISPENSING

Relevant Day One Competencies:

22. Access the appropriate sources of data on licensed medicines.
23. Dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with veterinary surgeon direction, legislation and latest guidance.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Ensure safe handling and management of pharmaceuticals in accordance with legislation	<p>Store, handle and dispose of medicines in line with legislative guidelines and specific requirements found in the MIMMS and with reference to their drug category</p> <p>Acts and any relevant codes relating to the following must be covered: Health and Safety, Drugs and Poisons Act</p> <p>To include: controlled drugs and cytotoxic/cytostatic/certain hormonal medicines that require special handling and disposal</p> <p>Apply understanding of: classification, indications, contraindications, formulation, adverse reactions, common drug interactions, side effects of a range of common medications and where to find the information in the future as they come across other medications, safe handling across all species</p>
2 Interpret prescriptions and prepare medicines for dispensing according to legislative requirements	<p>Calculate drug dosages and confirm with colleague/veterinarian</p> <p>Package and label in accordance with legal requirements</p> <p>Evaluate changing uses in drugs due to developing resistance (anthelmintic and antibiotics)</p>
3 Ensure appropriate record keeping for a range of medications including controlled drugs is carried out	Controlled drugs (CDs) medicines records

SECTION 8: INFECTION CONTROL

Relevant Day One Competencies:

24. Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including observing the appropriate health and safety recommendations.
25. Apply principles of biosecurity correctly, including sterilisation of equipment and disinfection of clothing.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Recognise clinical signs of common notifiable and zoonotic diseases and undertake strategies to prevent spread and infection	Apply to all relevant species, including causative agent, possible clinical signs, control and prevention, cat, dog, rabbit, bird, cattle, horse, sheep, exotics Apply knowledge of biosecurity and maintenance of this within all areas of veterinary practice and the country itself (refer to AVA biosecurity guidelines) https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
2 Implement appropriate infection control strategies according to practice protocol/policy	Constitute appropriate cleaning and disinfectant solutions, limit contamination of hospital, prepare, clean and maintain patient accommodation that maximises the welfare of hospitalised patients to include isolation accommodation, prepare, clean and maintain examination rooms, preparation area and operating theatre to include periodic deep clean and following infected cases
3 Dispose of hazardous and non-hazardous waste safely and correctly according to current legislation	https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
4 Ensure appropriate hygiene skills are followed before and after handling animals and equipment	Comply with the World Health Organisation (WHO) hand washing method, use and disposal of PPE
5 Carry out effective barrier nursing	Take into account accommodation, PPE, equipment and patient condition

SECTION 9: THEATRE PRACTICE

Relevant Day One Competencies:

26. Prepare and maintain the environment, equipment and patient for aseptic surgery.
27. Assist the veterinary surgeon as a scrubbed nurse to perform surgical procedures on patients.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Check, clean and maintain surgical instruments	Identify common surgical instruments, identify and report damage to equipment and instruments Carry out regular maintenance
2 Prepare, package and monitor the sterilisation of instruments and materials	Understand and implement sterilisation methods specific to equipment. Be aware of expiry dates for surgical kits and instruments e.g. 3 months/6 months, etc. Implement appropriate quality control methods e.g. Bowie Dick test strip/biological and pack rotation
3 Prepare the theatre for use based on equipment and procedure	Damp dust and set up theatre in a manner that allows for movement of personnel without compromising asepsis
4 Position patients appropriately on the operating table in accordance with the planned procedure taking into account patient condition	
5 Prepare the surgical site appropriately for the procedure in accordance with veterinary surgeon's preference	Utilise recognised scrub techniques to minimise surgical site contamination
6 Assist as surgical/circulating nurse	Open and pass sterile materials direct to scrubbed personnel, prepare ancillary and powered equipment
7 Prepare hands and arms for aseptic techniques using appropriate method as recommended by WHO	Include appropriate contact time, counted stroke technique and recommended alcohol-based product, or use of hand sanitiser technique
8 Prepare for surgical assistance wearing appropriate attire	Don surgical scrub suit, hat, mask, gown and gloves (closed gloving method) in an aseptic manner to assist with surgery
9 Put on surgical gloves (open gloving method) in an aseptic manner to assist with sterile procedures	Maintain sterility

10 Maintain sterility of self and others during procedures	
11 Assist with draping patient whilst maintaining sterility	
12 Monitor and record materials during surgery	
13 Handle and pass instruments and equipment aseptically during surgery	Provide sterile assistance

SECTION 10: ANAESTHESIA

Relevant Day One Competencies:

28. Assist the veterinary surgeon by preparing patients, equipment and materials for anaesthetic procedures.

29. Assist in administering and maintaining anaesthesia to patients.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Assess the patient's anaesthetic risks	To include ASA guidelines, behaviour and temperament https://www.ava.com.au/node/101544
2 Prepare for anaesthesia	Check and prepare the anaesthetic machine in accordance with practice protocol; select and prepare appropriate breathing system/circuit and pollution control system in accordance with practice protocol; select and prepare monitoring equipment according to the patient's condition; prepare materials and equipment required for induction of anaesthesia to include pharmaceutical agents (according to veterinary surgeon direction) and appropriate airway management device
3 Prepare patients for anaesthesia	Including but not limited to: administer prescribed premedicants and assess the patient's response, assist with airway management device placement (check position and secure airway management device)
4 Maintain and monitor the patient during the anaesthetic process	Measure temperature, heart rate, central and peripheral pulse, respiratory rate; utilise mechanical monitoring techniques which may include pulse oximetry, blood pressure, ETCO ₂ , ECG; evaluate depth of anaesthesia; monitor equipment (systems/circuits and tube, gases and volatile agents, patient monitors); interpret and report observations to the directing veterinary surgeon (inconsistencies, patient monitors); calculate and administer inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction (change the depth or level of inhalation anaesthesia under veterinary direction)
5 Complete anaesthetic monitoring records	Ensure to record/file under appropriate patient
6 Monitor recovery from anaesthesia	Disconnect patients from anaesthetic equipment and materials; position patients for recovery; remove airway management device at appropriate stage of recovery; maintain accurate recovery records; communicate postoperative and/or anaesthetic recovery progress to the supervising veterinary surgeon; monitor patient for pain and wound complications postoperatively; monitor vital signs postoperatively

SECTION 11: DENTISTRY

Relevant Day One Competencies:

30. Assist the veterinary surgeon by preparing patients, equipment and materials for dental procedures.

31. Perform routine dental prophylaxis procedure.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Describe the anatomy and common pathology of the mouth and teeth	
2 Use of dental charting for dental procedures	Chart pre- and post-procedure findings using recognised key/abbreviations
3 Perform all steps of routine prophylaxis procedure	Conscious and unconscious oral exam and record findings; set up and position patient for dental procedure; scale and polish as directed by a veterinary surgeon
4 Set up, check, clean and maintain both hand and mechanical dental equipment	Includes ultrasonic scaler, low- and high-speed hand pieces, hand instruments, sharpening techniques and the use of suction
5 Provide advice on home care for dental patients	Including appropriate ongoing prophylaxis options

VNCA Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing:

SECTION 12: Rural Specific Skills

Relevant Day One Competencies:

32. Deliver rural specific husbandry techniques in accordance with best practice and due regard to animal welfare and country legislation.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Describe common diseases in rural species	Dependent on state/territory but may include but not limited to: tetanus, leptospirosis, black leg
2 Describe parasitology as it applies in the Australian rural context	Include endo and exo parasites of sheep, cattle, horse, reproduction in the context of the farming treatments and calendar
3 Evaluate the reproductive cycles of common farm species in Australia	Sheep, cattle, horse
4 Evaluate the anatomy and common conditions of the foot and techniques to manage these	Sheep, cattle, horse
5 Describe the DPI response to exotic diseases, depending on the incursion	e.g. High level: Foot and mouth disease, Hendra, equine flu Moderate: TSE Low level: ticks

SECTION 13: Exotics Specific Skills

Relevant Day One Competencies:

33. Deliver exotic specific husbandry techniques in accordance with best practice and due regard to animal welfare and country legislation.
34. Deliver and assist in the veterinary nursing care of exotic and wildlife species including small mammals, birds and reptiles.

Skill	Guidance/Resources
1 Check, clean and maintain surgical instruments	Identify common surgical instruments, identify and report damage to equipment and instruments Carry out regular maintenance
2 Prepare, package and monitor the sterilisation of instruments and materials	Understand and implement sterilisation methods specific to equipment. Be aware of expiry dates for surgical kits and instruments e.g. 3 months/6 months, etc. Implement appropriate quality control methods e.g. Bowie Dick test strip/biological and pack rotation
3 Prepare the theatre for use based on equipment and procedure	Damp dust and set up theatre in a manner that allows for movement of personnel without compromising asepsis
4 Position patients appropriately on the operating table in accordance with the planned procedure taking into account patient condition	
5 Prepare the surgical site appropriately for the procedure in accordance with veterinary surgeon's preference	Utilise recognised scrub techniques to minimise surgical site contamination
6 Assist as surgical/circulating nurse	Open and pass sterile materials direct to scrubbed personnel, prepare ancillary and powered equipment
7 Prepare hands and arms for aseptic techniques using appropriate method as recommended by WHO	Include appropriate contact time, counted stroke technique and recommended alcohol-based product, or use of hand sanitiser technique
8 Prepare for surgical assistance wearing appropriate attire	Don surgical scrub suit, hat, mask, gown and gloves (closed gloving method) in an aseptic manner to assist with surgery