

Veterinarians Like Their Jobs, Survey Finds

Study cites a diversified field, being liked by community.

Veterinarians are apparently pretty happy and really like their jobs, according to a recent survey conducted by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

AVMA took data from its 2007 Member Needs Assessment, which surveyed members regarding job satisfaction and happiness, and compared it to existing job satisfaction data taken from a study published by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago in 2007. The comparison showed that veterinarians have a very high level of job satisfaction (3.55), just behind clergy (3.79), teachers (3.61) and psychologists (3.59), but above physicians (3.47) and lawyers (3.33). The average rating in the NORC study for all jobs was 3.3.

One of the reasons veterinarians may like their job is because the field is so diversified, from small-animal medicine to research to academia, according to Robert Dietl, DVM, chair of the AVMA Membership Services Committee. "There are a lot of opportunities in veterinary medicine, so you don't get pigeonholed in a career you don't enjoy," he said.

There is also innate integrity in the profession, said Charles Hendrix, DVM, former AVMA vice president and former chair of the AVMA Wellness Committee.

"Studies have shown that veterinarians are highly respected by the communities they serve," he said. "People like us a lot, and that can make you happy."

Despite the growing shortage of food-animal veterinarians, they ranked the highest (3.69) in job satisfaction compared to other veterinarians. Companion-animal veterinarians scored a 3.52 job satisfaction rating.

The survey also revealed that veterinarians are fairly happy, although their ranking dropped slightly when compared to the NORC study. The profession's happiness score of 2.3 was below that of lawyers (2.37) and physicians (2.39).

Average happiness for all jobs on the NORC study was 2.23. One of the reasons veterinarians may report that they are less happy than they are satisfied with their jobs may be because of income, Dietl said. Veterinarians are not as highly paid as physicians or lawyers.

"I think economics are a major factor," Dietl said. "With the economy as it is today, I think veterinarians would probably report they weren't as happy today as they were last year."