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# For the love of animals

**Those who love and care for animals will find a veterinarian's job interesting.**

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**G**ROWING up with dogs and a love for animals has made Vijayndra Madawan choose a career as a veterinarian.

Pet owners, who go to the veterinary clinic called Healing Rooms in Subang Jaya, Selangor, will testify to Dr Vijay's love for animals.

Dr Vijay says it all started when a friend suggested that he apply for the veterinary programme and was pleasantly surprised when he was accepted.

He earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 1996 and stayed on complete his Master in Veterinary Medicine in 1999.

Having been in the industry for 11 years now, Dr Vijay is no stranger to injuries on the job.

"When I first started out I was bitten, scratched and clawed by pets. I have to say that cat bites are the worst - they are extremely painful," says the 37-year-old father of one.

Dr Vijay started off as a veterinarian on a pig farm where he worked for a year. But he soon felt that he was not progressing in his career.

He returned to UPM to work at its veterinary hospital for five years before going into private practice and has been at the Healing Rooms since.

"There are a lot of doctors but definitely not many veterinarians.

## **My job involves ...**

... the immediate healthcare of pets.

Most of the time we deal with dogs and cats but we also treat rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs and iguanas.

Lately there has been an increase in the number of pets such as snakes, ferrets and hedgehogs, but the treatment of such animals is still very limited.

In such cases, we will have to make adjustments as the drugs and medications are not always available.



Dr Vijayndra giving a pill to a cat.

## **My morning starts with ...**

... tending to the warded pets and administering the appropriate medication.

We will ensure that dogs are walked and the cats are cleaned.

Once the morning routine is completed, we attend to pets that come into the clinic.

We try to stick closely to the appointments, but sometimes emergencies do crop up or treatment can take longer than expected.

In some urgent cases, it can mean having to perform immediate surgery.

For example if a cat cannot urinate, it will cause them a lot of pain. This leads to extreme stress, which can send them into cardiac arrest.

During the non-busy hours, usually in the afternoon, we will perform surgery from 2pm onwards.

## **To qualify, you need ...**

... SPM, STPM or a diploma in animal health to get into a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programme.

UPM is currently the only higher education institution in Malaysia that has a veterinary programme.

The programme takes five years to complete and there are not as many places compared with medicine.

## **The best person for the job is ...**

... someone who likes animals and is compassionate towards them.

Being patient is something that is important too. I'm not naturally a patient person but when you care about what you do, you will take the effort and work hard to get it done.

### **Prospects for the future ...**

We will see the need for more veterinarians. There is a serious shortage in the industry now.

There are many cases of veterinary graduates not going into practice, which I think is a real shame.

Among my batch of 40 graduates only three or four of us eventually became veterinarians.

Others will go into other areas such as the marketing of medication and medical supplies or the farming or agriculture industry because all animal products require the supervision of a veterinarian.

### **I love my job because ...**

... it's fantastic! My hobby is a profession. It can be exhausting at times but when you do something that you love, you get lost in it.

### **What I dislike the most ...**

... is that the job obsesses you, which can be unhealthy and dangerous. But it's also good at the same time.

I like the job so much that I do it for the love of it and not the money.

I also dislike the fact that our costs disappoint people.

Animal healthcare is expensive and you shouldn't think about money when it comes to healthcare.

Pets don't choose to get sick. The medication and equipment are expensive and there are limited places to go when animals get sick. There are not many options for public or private clinics/hospitals.

### **A millionaire by 30?**

I'm 37 and nowhere near becoming a millionaire. The only way I'd be a millionaire is if I win the lottery.

If you are going to get into this, don't do it for the money.

Live morally and do it for your love of animals.

Perhaps if you worked for a medical company, you may be paid higher.

Veterinarians earn a decent pay – and this is subjective – but you will climb the ranks with training and experience.

It is very common these days to open your own clinic once you have the experience. This is usually the trend for vets who train overseas then return to Malaysia to work.

Many people want to be their own boss!



DR VIJAY: Pets don't choose to fall sick and there is still a lot more that needs to be done for them.



Dr Vijayendra operating on a cat. – Photos by GLENN GUAN