

## Continuing Education for California Veterinary Professionals

Veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians are mandated to complete specified continuing education (CE) as a condition of licensure renewal in California. The following are the most common CE questions and answers.

- 1) What is the CE requirement for California?

Veterinarians must complete 36 units (36 hours) and Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) must complete 20 units (20 hours) of CE during each two-year license renewal cycle. The veterinarian requirement may be found in the [California Business and Professions Code Section 4846.5](#) and the RVT requirement may be found in the [California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Section 2086.2](#).

- 2) What qualifies as CE?

CE courses must be offered by [statutorily approved providers](#) in accordance with the [California Business and Professions Code \(BPC\), section 4846.5\(b\)\(1\)](#), or must be included in the American Association of Veterinary State Board Registry of Approved Continuing Education ([AAVSB RACE](#)) list. Courses must be relevant to veterinary medicine as outlined in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 16, [Section 2085.6](#) for veterinarians, or [2086.5](#) for RVTs. Courses must be at least one hour in length (defined as 50 minutes of actual instruction) to qualify as CE (CCR 16, Sections [2085.3\(a\)](#) and [2086.4\(a\)](#)). CCR 16, [Section 2085\(e-f\)](#) lists, "lectures, conferences, workshops, video conferencing, distance learning technologies [webinars]..." and "self-study courses" as qualifying CE for veterinarians. [Section 2086\(d-e\)](#) lists the same for RVTs. Course instructors, course length, and attendance records must meet specified requirements ([CCR 16, Articles 9-10](#)). Licensees who participate in formulating questions for the state board examinations for the California state or national licensing exams may claim up to 16 units of CE [CCR 16, Section [2085.3\(d\)](#) for veterinarians and [2086.4\(d\)](#) for RVTs].

- 3) What constitutes "one unit" of CE?

One hour constitutes one unit. One credit hour must consist of not less than 50 minutes of actual instruction. Qualifying courses or presentations that are between 25 and 49 minutes in excess of one hour shall be granted credit in half-hour increments (meaning, half-unit increments). Reference: CCR 16, Sections [2085.3\(a\)](#) and [2086.4\(a\)](#).

- 4) What qualifies as self-study courses?

Veterinarians are allowed up to six units and RVTs are allowed up to four units per renewal cycle of self-study courses. Self-study is a form of orderly learning that does not offer participatory instruction between the attendee and an instructor during the instructional period.

Self-study may include:

- Independent study, reading journals, viewing video recordings or listening to audio recordings [CCR 16, [Section 2085\(f\)](#) for veterinarians and [Section 2086\(d\)](#) for RVTs].
- Pro bono spay/neuter services at a qualified animal control agency or shelter [[BPC 4846.5\(b\)\(2\)\(B\)](#)].

The VMB defines self-study as: "...courses [that] are performed at a licensee's residence, office, or other private location. Self-study includes viewing videotapes, listening to audio tapes, or journal reading, non-interactive online learning, etc. This also includes 'correspondence online

courses'. Licensees self-certify these hours by listing the various type of self-study they have completed."

- 5) Does a pre-recorded CE course with an instructor available afterwards for questions qualify as live/interactive CE?

No. The VMB counts online correspondence courses as self-study only because in order to qualify as a live/ interactive course, the instructor must be available to answer questions throughout the instructional period.

- 6) Do courses in business management count as CE?

Veterinarians may take up to 24 units and RVTs up to 15 units per renewal cycle on courses in business practice management or stress seminars (CCR, Title 16, Sections [2085.3\(e\)](#) and [2086.4\(e\)](#), respectively).

- 7) Are veterinarians in California required to take CE on the judicious use of antibiotics?

Yes, per the [BPC section 4846.5\(k\)\(1\)](#), veterinarians must take at least a one-hour course on the judicious use of medically important antimicrobial drugs every four years as a condition of licensure.

- 8) Can I teach a course and have it count towards my CE requirement?

If teaching a course the meets CE requirements (see Question 2), you may claim credit for the course. However, you can only claim credit for a course one time during a single renewal period.

- 9) Do temporary licensees have a CE requirement?

No. Only permanently licensed veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians are required to complete continuing education.

- 10) How long before my license is due for renewal can I take a CE course and have it count?

CE hours must be earned two years prior to your license expiration date. For example, if your license expires on January 31, 2022, you can accrue CE hours earned between February 1, 2020 and January 31, 2022. CE courses taken outside of your renewal window cannot count towards license renewal.

- 11) What if I do not complete all of the required CE by my license renewal date?

If you do not complete CE by your license expiration date, you may renew as inactive or wait to renew until you have completed the hours. Waiting to renew your license until you have completed the CE hours will result in your license expiring and becoming delinquent. Licensees with an inactive or delinquent status must cease practice until such time as they complete the 36 hours of approved CE. It is ILLEGAL to practice veterinary medicine in California with an inactive or expired license.

- 12) Does the VMB grant extensions for licensees to fulfill CE requirements in order to renew a license?

No. There is no provision in the law to allow for an extension on a license renewal. The only options available are to renew as inactive or become delinquent until the CE hours are completed. You cannot practice veterinary medicine with an inactive or delinquent license.

13) Are there any CE exemptions?

Veterinarians and RVTs are not required to obtain CE for their first license renewal [[California BPC, section 4846.5\(d\)](#) for veterinarians and CCR, Title 16, [Section 2086.1\(d\)](#) for RVTs]. Also, veterinarians with a University license are not required to complete CE as a condition of licensure.

There are other limited and specific circumstances (such as military service, physical disability, or carding for a disabled individual) in which the VMB may grant CE requirement waivers. Read [here](#) for veterinarians, and [here](#) for RVTs.

14) Who enforces CE laws in California?

The Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) observes the honor system when renewing licenses by requiring registrants to check a box confirming that required CE has been completed within the renewal period. The VMB has statutory authority to audit licensees to verify the CE requirements are met.

15) Do licensees have to keep records of CE?

Yes. Upon completing qualified CE, the provider must issue attendees a [certificate of course completion](#) with information specified in the CCR, Title 16, Sections [2085.8\(a\)](#) for veterinarians and [2086.7\(a\)](#) for RVTs. Licensees are required to retain course completion certificates for a period of four years pursuant to the CCR Title 16, Sections [2085.9\(b\)](#) for veterinarians and [2086.8\(a\)](#) for RVTs.

More information about CE may be accessed at the VMB website:

[https://www.vmb.ca.gov/licensees/continuing\\_ed.shtml](https://www.vmb.ca.gov/licensees/continuing_ed.shtml) or by visiting the CVMA website (cvma.net) and clicking on the Learning tab.