

2026 Investment Advice to TEC for the Veterinary Services and Animal Care Industry

Muka Tangata is the Workforce Development Council (WDC) for the food and fibre sector. We work on ways to enhance vocational education and training (VET) to meet the needs of industry, iwi and hapū Māori, ākongā (learners), and kaimahi (workers), and support them to flourish.

Alongside our work on qualifications, standards, and quality assurance, we advise government, based on engagement with industry, on what qualifications they should support and fund. This takes the form of our annual Investment Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). This focuses on the current set of qualifications (as TEC can only purchase programmes for existing qualifications).

This document sets out industry and workforce trends for the Veterinary Services and Animal Care industry, as well as identified skills needs. We have used this information to determine how many places are needed for qualifications relevant to the Veterinary Services and Animal care industry.

Veterinary Services and Animal Care Industry trends:

Despite a few fluctuations, the Veterinary Services and Animal care industry has seen a steady upward trend in GDP growth since 2005.

Veterinary Services and Animal Care Workforce trends:

The workforce has been steadily growing with corresponding increases in learner numbers. We expect this trend to follow industry growth forecasts. A recent industry report by Boehringer Ingelheim in partnership with NZVA and NZVNA indicates that 34% of clinic decision makers believe that their staffing levels will increase over the next 12 months.ⁱ

Industry skill needs identified from engagement

Our industry engagement analysis and review of key industry documents has highlighted the following skill needs across all qualification levels:

- Industry is looking to ensure that workers are appropriately skilled to maintain standards, including the interpersonal skills required to deal regularly with clientele, sometimes in emotionally charged environments.

The industry has reported that there is an occupation gap for the following occupations:

- Pet Groomers
- Veterinary nurses.

Further the recent industry report by Boehringer Ingelheim recommends that the industry need more trained managers and supervisors with leaderships skills so that they are better able to influence a positive working environment, focusing on team spirit and staff recognition.ⁱⁱ

Current qualifications and priorities

Below are three tables outlining qualifications and priorities. Where possible, each table outlines how these qualifications may fill skills needs, the scale of change we are seeking in our advice, the preferred mode of delivery, and the level of priority for this change.

Table 1: Veterinary Services and Animal Care related qualifications

Table 2: Pan sector qualifications and credentials

Mode

We have not been specific about mode at a qualification level. However, in general, we recommend a preference for workplace training as part of the mix of the provision across all of our industries. This could include both work-based training and campus-based learning that include a strong component of practical 'on job' experience in a workplace setting.

The Boehringer Ingelheim report recommends exploring establishing a vocational or apprenticeship model as a potential alternative pathway into the Veterinary Services workforce.ⁱⁱⁱ

What are we looking for?

For these three tables, we are seeking feedback on the following:

- Are industry using these qualifications?
- What is the preferred mode of delivery? (e.g. workplace-based, extramural, etc.)
- Do you agree with our prioritisation or have any recommendations for qualifications where we have not given a level of priority (low, medium, high)?
- What sort of level change do you anticipate? How many more trained people do you need?

Table 1: Veterinary Services and Animal Care related qualifications

Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
New Zealand Certificate in Animal Care (Level 3): Companion Animals, Equine, and Rural Animals [2487]	The New Zealand Certificate in Animal Care (Level 3) is the level entry qualification to the industry that provides individuals with the skills and knowledge to care for animals within welfare standards and practices.			
New Zealand Certificate in Animal Technology (Level 5): Rural Animal Technician, and Veterinary Nursing Assistant [2490] and New Zealand Certificate in Animal Healthcare Assisting (Level 4): Companion Animal Healthcare, Equine Healthcare, and Rural Animal Healthcare [4388]	The New Zealand Certificate in Animal Healthcare Assisting (Level 4): Companion Animal Healthcare, Equine Healthcare, and Rural Animal Healthcare provides the animal healthcare sector with people who have technical knowledge and skills to assist in the provision of healthcare for animal patients, working in collaboration with clients and multidisciplinary animal healthcare teams, and following protocols in all aspects of clinical veterinary practice or animal healthcare settings.	5%		
New Zealand Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (level 6) [2491] and New Zealand Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (level 6): Companion Animal Veterinary Nursing, and Equine Veterinary Nursing [4389]	Graduates of the New Zealand Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (level 6) will have technical knowledge and skills to work as a veterinary nurse in a clinical veterinary setting. They will have a high level of responsibility and discretion within their scope of practice, in a wide range of dynamic and often unpredictable situations and following protocols in all aspects of clinical veterinary practice or animal healthcare settings.	10-15%		

New Zealand Diploma in Animal Healthcare Technology (Level 6): Canine and Equine Rehabilitation Technology, and Equine Dental Technology [4390]	This qualification is intended for people who are aware of the importance of animals in society, and who intend to practise as part of the multidisciplinary animal healthcare team within a diverse range of clinical environments.			
New Zealand Diploma in Rural Animal Veterinary Technology (Level 6) [4391]	This qualification is intended for people who are aware of the importance of rural animals in society, and who have the technical knowledge and skills to work in clinical veterinary/animal healthcare settings such as rural animal or mixed-animal veterinary clinics, or alongside veterinarians providing rural animal healthcare services in a variety of settings.			
New Zealand Certificate in Animal Management (Level 4): Canine Behaviour and Training, Companion Animals, Fish, Amphibians and Reptiles, Pet Grooming, and Zookeeping [2489]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide individuals with the skills, knowledge and attributes to maintain and manage a positive welfare state for animals.			

Table 2: Pan-sector qualifications and credentials				
Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
Emerging Leadership in People, Food and Fibre Industries (Micro-credential) (Level 4) [5044]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential to recognise the skills and knowledge attained by learners/ākonga as they enter leadership roles across a range of People, Food and Fibre industries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential provides a training scaffold to support and upskill potential, new, or existing leaders, including	Recently developed		

	seasonal workers and career changers, and workers in supporting industries, into leadership roles.			
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ⁱ Boehringer Ingelheim, “Boehringer-Taking-Animal-Health-Forward-Whitepaper.Pdf,” Boehringer Ingelheim, August 5, 2024, <https://www.boehringer-ingelheim.com/au/bipdf/boehringer-taking-animal-health-forward-whitepaperpdf>.

ⁱⁱ Ingelheim.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ingelheim.

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