

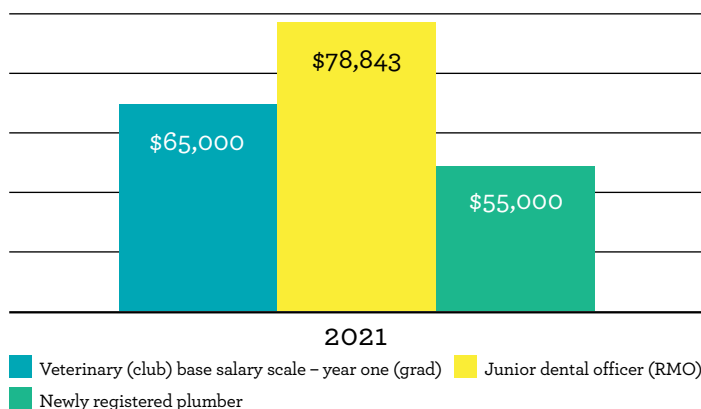


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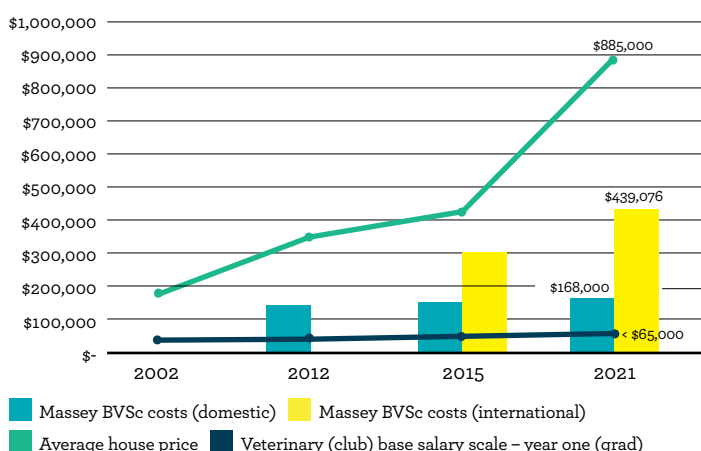
VCNZ’s Seton Butler reflects on how the veterinary profession compares with other sectors in relation to salary and employment conditions.

I’ve included two astonishing graphs in this issue’s column. Graph 1 shows the published data for the ‘graduate’ salaries of three professions – veterinarians, junior dental officers¹ and newly registered plumbers² at ‘day one’. The dental officer salary is included because it appears to be the closest equivalent in human healthcare to a veterinarian’s at the time of graduation.

GRAPH 1. **Comparative salaries 2021**



GRAPH 2. **Veterinary club base salary compared to housing and education expenses**



The veterinary (club) base salary scale – year 1 (grade 1)³ represents the Association of Rural Practitioners’ starting salary for graduate veterinarians. It appears to include on-call roster (1:6) and call-out duties, statutory leave provisions (four weeks’ annual leave; two weeks’ sick leave), the minimum

KiwiSaver contribution (3%) and a CPD allowance. (Some employers already provide significantly more generous benefits, such as vehicle usage, relocation allowance and time in lieu for on call work).

In simplified terms, the remuneration package for junior dental officers (from graduation, employed before 17 May 2021, non-urban scales) includes:

- ➔ employer superannuation contribution: up to 6% of earnings
- ➔ additional duties where required to cover absences from the roster: 8am–10pm, \$60 per hour; 10pm–8am, \$90 per hour
- ➔ on-call duties: \$8 per hour in addition to other remuneration; the public holiday rate is \$10 per hour
- ➔ call-backs: paid for a minimum of three hours, or for working and travelling time, whichever is greater
- ➔ annual leave: 30 days per annum; sick leave: 30 working days per annum
- ➔ CPD: two hours protected training time per week and, for all employees in their second and subsequent years of service, five days CPD leave.

Graph 2 compares the year-one veterinary graduate salary with education, housing and living costs.

The data on the cost of education estimates the tuition and living costs for a five-year period for both domestic and international Massey⁴ students. For example, in 2021 the estimated cost of a BVSc was \$168,000 for a domestic graduate and \$439,000 for an international graduate, and the average house price was \$885,000. Their salary on this scale would have been \$65,000.

Taken together, these graphs make interesting reading. While I’m sure you can draw your own conclusions, the solution is a little more complex. It’s worth reading the business benchmarking feature (page 46), plus, watch out for my next column.

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¹ Junior dental officer – New Zealand Resident Doctors’ Association and New Zealand District Health Boards’ multi-employer collective agreement, 17 May 2021 – Grandparented Junior Dental Officer Salary Scales.

² occupationoutlook.mbie.govt.nz/construction-and-infrastructure/plumbers-and-gasfitters

³ Veterinary base salary scale – New Zealand Vet Clubs Association and Club Practitioners Branch of the NZVA

⁴ www.massey.ac.nz/study/all-qualifications-and-degrees/bachelor-of-veterinary-science-ubvts