



FACT SHEET

Did you know?

- Veterinarians have one of the highest rates of suicide worldwide
- Veterinarians are four-times more likely than the general population, and twice as likely as other health professionals, to commit suicide
- Approximately one veterinarian will take their own life every 12 weeks.

But why? Don't they get to play with cute animals all day?

- Despite the common perception, veterinarians and veterinary nurses do not get to just play with cute animals all day
- Their job is extremely demanding – often working very long hours without a break, having to deal with unexpected emergencies throughout the day – and often right as they are ready to go home to their own families
- Some of the major contributing factors are:
 - Compassion fatigue – having to show compassion to pet owners and help them through traumatic times with their pets can take its toll. They may have had a number of clients one-after-the-other where this has occurred during the day, and then they have to put on their 'happy face' for the next client
 - Euthanasing animals – severing the human-animal bond can be very distressing. Depending on the circumstances for the euthanasia, it can be very traumatising for vets to put animals to sleep – particularly if they could save the animal but the owners choose not to for financial or other reasons
 - Unrealistic expectations – although vets do perform what may seem like miracles, there are still limits to what can be done for an animal's wellbeing. Unfortunately some pet owners have very unrealistic expectations and 'demands' that are not only unreasonable, but incredibly unfair. Most vets have the animal's wellbeing at heart and will do whatever they can to help them, however, sadly there are

times when the owner's expectations simply cannot be met for circumstances outside the vet's control

- Financial matters – yes, the cost of veterinary treatment can seem expensive, but realistically, so are the costs of the equipment and resources vets need to be able to do their job. Did you know that the CT and MRI scanners are the same as those used for humans? They can cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars to purchase and maintain. For the majority of vets, their average maximum salary is around \$75,000-\$79,000 per annum – definitely not comparable to other specialists. They also have a business to run, which generally involves staff wages and expenses, equipment and repairs, and other operating costs such as rent, electricity, products etc. There is generally not much profit to be made in running a private veterinary practice.

What can you do to help?

- STOP and think before you act or speak. If your actions or words are not respectful, would you appreciate being spoken to or treated in that way? If not, then please reconsider your words or actions before they take place – after all, they cannot be taken back once they are acted on!
- STOP and think if you would act this way to your doctor, hairdresser, accountant, or other service provider. If not, why do you think it is okay to treat the vet staff this way? (By the way – it's not!)
- Take time to say 'thank you' to the vet staff. You have no idea how much of a difference these two simple, but powerful, words can make
- Show compassion to the vet staff – they may have just spent the day euthanasing other's beloved pets and supporting the owners through their grief
- Acknowledge the great job they do!
- Spread the word – the more we talk about these issues, the sooner we can address them!
- Make your vet staff feel valued and appreciated by being polite, considerate, caring, and by saying those magic words – “thank you”.