



# Chenault Veterinary Hospital Assistant Staff Development



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## Introduction

Chenault Veterinary Hospital is one of three sister hospitals that were started up by Dr. R.B. Chenault Jr. and are now overseen by the clinic supervisor, Heather Lewis, as part of the National Veterinary Associates (NVA). I had the immense pleasure of working alongside incredible doctors and staff during the summer of 2022, as well as during my capstone experience throughout the course of Winter Break in 2022/2023. During my capstone experience, I got to work at the hospital and on my project for approximately 175 total hours. During this time, I worked as a veterinary assistant, exploring the veterinary world I aspire to participate in one day, as well as working towards providing a project that would serve to benefit the hospital in its operation long after I left.



Chenault Veterinary Hospital Building.

## Project And Motivation

The focus of my project was decided based off of my own assessment of the hospital's greatest needs from my personal experience starting there the previous summer. The first time I ever set foot inside of a veterinary clinic was for my job interview in 2021 and the only information I was provided with was basic veterinary assistant responsibilities from their website and an email to come in wearing scrubs on the first day. I then had to learn the overwhelming amount of duties, techniques, and veterinary information required of my position through shadowing other employees and asking countless questions. This form of education in a healthcare profession can be very challenging for both parties of the training, not to mention it can greatly disrupt workflow. I found that I was still learning new things every single day about the hospital's operation and standard veterinary care many months into working as a veterinary assistant. I was shocked to find that this was the case for staff that had been working there months and even years longer than myself. This was evidently problematic since the turnover of assistants was so great that not a single veterinary assistant that I worked with in the summer of 2021 remained at that hospital the following year. I decided that the best thing that I could provide my hospital was a method to more rapidly develop their staff, reducing stress on all staff, and allowing for maintained professionalism and efficiency. After communicating with my clinic manger, the idea was met with large support and resulted in the production of an introductory PowerPoint and 16 distinct, printed job aids available in folders appropriately placed around the hospital to educate novice assistants on necessary information (like standard vaccination schedules), duties, and hospital equipment operation for their role.

## Serving As A Veterinary Assistant

Through working as a veterinary assistant for my capstone experience, I gained invaluable career experience completing the following tasks:

- Checking in clients and assessing patient needs
- Restraining animals during appointments
- Preparing animals for surgery
- Providing patient monitoring and assistance during surgery
- Collecting samples and running diagnostic tests
- Drawing up vaccines/ filling medications
- Contacting and invoicing clients
- Providing general hospital maintenance and much more



The left image displays the hospital's surgery room. The right image shows me with a golden retriever pup that visited for vaccines.

## Hospital Information/ Responsibilities Aids

Of the 16 job aids produced, I classified 7 under this category, which is dedicated to ensuring that the veterinary assistants understand what is expected of them in each area of hospital maintenance and assistance, as well as are prepared to provide clients with standard veterinary information. These job aids included the following:

- A detailed list of **opening duties**
- A detailed list of **closing duties**
- Instructions for **closing surgery**
- Responsibilities when **assisting in surgery**
- Responsibilities during **surgery transitions**
- Responsibilities during **euthanasia appointments**
- Information regarding **vaccine schedules and coverage**



### Opening Duties Downstairs

- **CLOCK IN**
- Check for and follow any **Hospitalized Patient instructions** (counter near printer), as well as **check on the animals' well-being**.
- Prepare exam rooms for the day (1 room - room 44, 2 room 45, 2 room 46)
  - Lights on, materials stocked, notes clean and presentable.
- Fill the bowl in the sink halfway with water and chlorhexin in a ratio of around 1:21 respectively.
- Fill medications for labels printed overnight.
  - Place on a brown paper bag for clients that are not visiting with a patient that day, writing client's last name, patient name, and date on the bag.
- Clean any areas that could use it!

### Morning Stocking

- Return items from the drying tray to their appropriate location
  - Slides, oral syringes, fecal cups, fecal loops, etc.
- Draw up injectable Bordetella and Rabies vaccines until cups in the fridge are full.
- Prepare heparinized syringes in the cup behind the sink until it's full.
- Make sure that preventative are available on the shelves in pharmacy.
- Make sure pharmacy drawers have syringes (oral syringes, needles, client bags, pill vials, and preventative boxes in **exam room 44**).
- Make sure exam room drawers and the treatment area have syringes, needles, catheters, fecal loops, bandage supplies, towels, muzzles, etc. stocked neatly.
- Make sure exam room counters have gauze, applicators, tongue depressors, cotton swabs, paper towels, nail trimmers, hemostatic tourniquet, ear decontaminant, De-OB - fresh rag, rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, etc. stocked neatly.
- **WRITE DOWN WHEN REMOVING ITEMS FROM THE GARAGE OR OPENING BOXES ON THE APPROPRIATE CLIPBOARD.**

Be mindful that an assistant is available to aid vets and LVTs as needed!

Be mindful when morning duties are complete on surgery days that the front desk may be drowsy with patient drop-offs and could use your assistance taking pets to kennels.

3. Begin the patient's fluids by placing the fluids needle into the patient's catheter and slightly undraining the fluid line until it is dripping at a pace directed by the doctor.
4. Attach the pulse oximeter clamp to the patient's tongue until the device starts reading the patient's heartbeats per minute (BPM) and oxygen levels. **CONTINUE MONITORING THE PATIENT AS IF YOU DO NOT TRUST THIS DEVICE. IT IS ONLY AN AID.** If the tongue doesn't work, try adding moisture to the tongue using fluid, or attaching it to other tissue, such as the patient's ear or between its toes. You may use alcohol on the patient's ear to increase the likelihood of a reading occurring.
5. Apply eye lubricant to both of the patient's eyes.
6. Thoroughly shave the area of the patient that the doctor directs and vacuum away the excess fur (remove large chunks of fur with your hands to prevent clogging the vacuum).
7. Using gauze with surgical scrub and gauze with rubbing alcohol, clean the area shaved for surgery before starting to use the "hotpack technique" (HAVE DEMONSTRATED BEFORE TRYING).
8. Once the doctor places his drapes on the animal, position the lights above the surgery table on the opening of the drapes. **DON'T TOUCH THE TOP OF THE DRAPES.**
9. Continue monitoring the patient throughout the surgery, assisting the doctor with light adjustments, iso adjustments, giving breaths, retrieving sterile items, etc.

Note: When adding sterile items to the doctor's surgery tray, pull apart the tabs on the packaging above the tray, so that the item falls onto the tray, or so that the doctor can grab the item directly. **DON'T TOUCH THE TRAY OR THE ITEM DIRECTLY.**



The picture above contains many of the items discussed that will be utilized during surgery aid.

Examples of job aids in these categories aimed to familiarize assistants with equipment and their roles.

## Hospital Procedure Aids

Of the 16 job aids produced, I classified 9 under this category, which is dedicated to describing hospital equipment and procedures, as well as providing step-by-step instructions on how to perform specific tasks. These job aids included the following:

- Types and steps for **Heartworm Tests**
- Steps for **preparing fecal/ ear slide samples**
- Steps for **running a urinalysis test**
- Steps for **running a blood test**
- Steps for **wrapping a general surgery pack**
- Steps for **assisting with catheter placement**
- Instructions for **operating the laser therapy device**
- Rules and tips for **invoicing clients in Cornerstone**
- Instructions for **going over surgery estimates with clients**



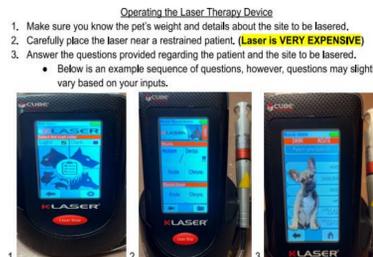
### Wrapping a General Surgery Pack

1. Make sure that anyone responsible has fully been comprehensively notified from all surgical assistants to be used in your clinic. All instruments should be thoroughly cleaned and dried.
2. Lay out all items in a clean fashion on the counter and then place a blue towel in a square shape underneath the items.
3. There should be 10 items of one type and 4 of another. Group them accordingly and lay them down from largest to smallest. Consider them to be arranged in a grid. Arrange them so that they are all facing the same direction and that they are all facing the same way.
4. Arrange them 2 with the set of 4 items, except there should be 10 items of the set of 4, arranged 20.
5. Grab a sterile instrument strip from the drawer and place it under the items so that it is between the items and the counter.
6. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.
7. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.
8. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.
9. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.
10. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.



### Following the Procedures with the Images Above

1. Make sure that anyone responsible has fully been comprehensively notified from all surgical assistants to be used in your clinic. All instruments should be thoroughly cleaned and dried.
2. Lay out all items in a clean fashion on the counter and then place a blue towel in a square shape underneath the items.
3. There should be 10 items of one type and 4 of another. Group them accordingly and lay them down from largest to smallest. Consider them to be arranged in a grid. Arrange them so that they are all facing the same direction and that they are all facing the same way.
4. Arrange them 2 with the set of 4 items, except there should be 10 items of the set of 4, arranged 20.
5. Grab a sterile instrument strip from the drawer and place it under the items so that it is between the items and the counter.
6. Place the items on the counter so that they are all facing the same way.
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### Operating the Laser Therapy Device

1. Make sure you know the pet's weight and details about the site to be lasered.
2. Carefully place the laser near a restrained patient. **(Laser is VERY EXPENSIVE)**
3. Answer the questions provided regarding the patient and the site to be lasered.
  - Below is an example sequence of questions, however, questions may slightly vary based on your inputs.



Note: Answer questions from top to bottom. After selecting the weight in image 4, press the yellow triangle to continue.

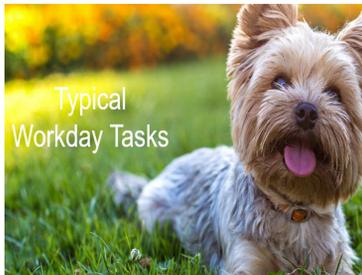
4. Confirm that the details are correct on image five, then press the yellow triangle and select the laser head that matches the one on the laser.
5. Once informed that the laser is ready, put on the protective eyewear and press the button on side of the laser to begin. You can cancel the laser after it has begun by pressing the red "Laser Stop" button.
6. Once the laser has started, alternate between back and forth/up and down movements around the site to be lasered at a distance of about half an inch from the surface of the animal's skin and at a moderate pace.

**DO NOT LET THE LASER SIT STILL DIRECTED AT ONE POINT OF THE PATIENT'S SKIN!**

Examples of job aids in this category aimed to guide new assistants through detail sensitive procedures.

## Veterinary Assistant Introduction PowerPoint

Working as a part of the Chenault Veterinary Hospital team is the closest, I believe I will ever get to being a part of a staff that treats each other like family. However, upon hire I was provided very little welcome prior to my first day and given little to no impression of the wonderful atmosphere I would be stepping into. That uncertainty coupled with limited knowledge of position expectations can be intimidating for newly hired assistants. This is why I formulated a welcoming PowerPoint that familiarizes new hires with their general roles and offers them insight on what Chenault Veterinary Hospital stands for.



Typical Workday Tasks



Our Team

Examples of slides from the welcoming PowerPoint.

## Project Delivery

### 10 Folders Containing Job Aids

- 6 exam rooms
- Surgery
- Treatment area
- Pharmacy
- Pre-surgery



### Flash Drive

- Contains copies of all the job aids, as well as a copy of the introductory PowerPoint.
- Able to be edited to meet the hospital's changing protocols, as well as adjusted to suit other hospitals needs.

This image shows the folders (blue), job aids (yellow), and flash drive that I provided the clinic.

## Conclusions

This experience not only provided me with practical veterinary experience, but it pushed me to become as informed with my position as possible and network with my employees to ensure my information met hospital standards. I now have meaningful, lifelong connections with others in my field of study and was honored to have the opportunity to give back to those that provided me such valuable opportunities. They now have the tools necessary to rapidly develop new veterinary assistants to minimize errors in such a sensitive profession and greatly reduce the burden that training puts on the hospital.

## Acknowledgments

I have to acknowledge doctors Erika Kellar-Brown, Matt Mc Kercher, and R.B. Chenault Jr., licensed veterinary technicians Amanda Reed and Morgan Bishoff, our clinic manager Heather Lewis, and all of the veterinary assistants who assisted me along the way. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Cynthia Wood for pushing me to find a project that serves to benefit others, as opposed to doing mere research. I could not have pulled this off without all of you.



Chenault Veterinary Hospital Medical Staff.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions that you would like answered regarding my capstone project or experience, please email me at christianc@vt.edu.