VEM5322 Shelter Medicine

SEMESTER: SUMMER 2026
CREDIT HOURS: 1 CREDIT HOUR
GRADING SYSTEM: A-E GRADING
PHASE: II

Course Coordinator
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Course Description
This course will introduce students to the concepts utilized by successful shelter veterinarians to ensure the animals in their care remain healthy both physically and emotionally. This includes an immersive weeklong hands-on experience at a busy Florida animal shelter. Students will work alongside shelter veterinarians, staff, and leadership to gain first-hand experience in shelter operations, infectious disease control, forensics, behavior, patient care, heartworm treatment, surgery, population management, leadership, animal social services, veterinary care in underserved communities, and professional wellness.

This course requires previous or concurrent enrollment in VEM5321 as a prerequisite. Course enrollment is limited to 16 students. Admission is by online application at **2026 Summer VEM5322 Miami Shelter Camp Application** by March 1, 2026.

Student Learning Outcomes
After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Describe the key role veterinarians skilled in shelter medicine play in shelter operations and leadership
2. Describe characteristics of effective leadership and adapt communication style to colleagues and internal and external stakeholders
3. Describe the role of animal shelters in society, including public safety and animal social services
4. Design evidence-based protocols for comprehensive wellness, preventive care, husbandry, biosecurity, and disease management, including intake protocols, daily rounds, and treatments
5. Develop and administer heartworm treatment plans for infected dogs
6. Describe the shelter veterinarian's role in recognition and reporting of suspected animal abuse
7. Perform basic steps in a forensic medical examination, including physical exam, evidence collection, photography, and documentation

8. Describe the importance of enrichment and behavioral treatment programs and implement appropriate activities
9. Demonstrate safe and low-stress animal handling techniques
10. Describe how effective population management, including intake diversion, pathway planning, and minimizing length of stay benefit shelter operations, improve outcomes, and promote One Health
11. Explain the importance of targeted spay-neuter and community cat management programs
12. Describe gaps in access to veterinary care and different models for meeting the needs of underserved pet owners and diverse communities
13. Describe strategies for selecting a compatible position in shelter medicine and creating a positive work environment, displaying cultural competency, maintaining work-life balance, and mitigating the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue in self and staff

Course Schedule

In Summer 2026, the course will be open July 6, 2026 to July 29, 2026. The first 2 weeks are fully online and self-paced.

The third week will be spent at the Miami-Dade Animal Services shelter capped off with a TNR clinic day. On-site shelter dates are July 20-26, 2026 with travel to Miami on July 19, 2026 and back to Gainesville on July 26, 2026. Group travel and shared accommodation costs are covered by the Shelter Medicine program, and students are expected to provide their own meals.

The onsite schedule is typically 8 am to 5 pm with occasional after-hours activities. Nightly homework will be assigned to prepare for the next day's activities. The daily schedule of activities will vary to coincide with the best learning opportunities in the shelter. Please refer to Canvas for the schedule of assignments and final examination as well as announcements about any changes to the schedule. Typical onsite topics and activities include:

Date and Time	Topic/Module/Unit	Faculty	SLO #	Instructional Time
Variable	Introduction, shelter tour	All	1,4,10	1
Variable	Population Wellbeing	All	1,3 ,4,10	1
Variable	Cat Castration	All	1, 4,10	1
Variable	Community Cat Management	All	4,9,10,12	1
Variable	Preventive Care	All	1,3	1
Variable	Community Cat Field Exercise	All	3,12,	1
Variable	Physical Wellness	All	1,4,	1
Variable	Neonatal Care	All	1,	1
Variable	Behavioral Care	All	4,8,9	1
Variable	Emotional Wellness	All	8,9	1
Variable	Veterinary Forensics	All	4,6,7	1
Variable	Heartworm Diagnosis	All	1,5	1
Variable	Heartworm Treatment	All	5,9	1
Variable	Capacity for Care	All	2,8,9,10	1

Variable	Infectious Disease Management	All	1,3,10	1
Variable	Compassion Fatigue	All	2,13	1
Variable	Animal Intake and Preventive Care	All	1,3,12	1
Variable	Medical Rounds and Treatments	All	1,4,5	1
		Total		18

Required Textbooks and/or Course Materials

No textbooks are required for this course. All required readings and resources are provided in Canvas

Recommended Textbooks and/or Course Materials

- Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff, 2nd ed, Lila Miller and Stephen Zawistowski, eds. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013
- Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters, 2nd ed. Lila Miller, Stephanie Janeczko, Kate Hurley, eds. Wiley-Blackwell, 2021
- High-Quality, High-Volume Spay and Neuter and Other Shelter Surgeries, Sara White, ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2020
- Completion of Fear Free Shelters certification
- The Shelter Medicine Office Library has these and other textbooks available for loan

Methods of Evaluation

Online preparation prior to the shelter visit includes a series of graded assignments, consisting of quizzes, analysis of recorded presentations,online certifications, and discussions. In addition to hands-on activities graded by the attending instructors at the shelter, the preparation activities contribute to evaluations of professionalism, patient care, knowledge base, preparation, participation, teamwork, reliability, and attendance expected of a working shelter veterinarian. All participating clinicians and staff will contribute to the evaluation. Clinical rounds and patient care include rounds, treatments, diagnostic sample collection, surgery, heartworm cases, neonatal care, and documentation. Shelter operations and public policy include behavior, enrichment, intake, forensics, kennel operations, access to veterinary care, community cat management, and community collaboration. Professionalism includes preparation, teamwork, participation, reliability, punctuality, submission of a travel sponsorship letter, and course feedback commentary/instructor evaluations. Case presentation is a concise clinical presentation to peers and faculty about a shelter animal patient selected by the student. The final examination is multiple choice and covers content from the entire course.

Grades will be calculated based on the following:

Item	Weight
Clinical rounds and patient care	40%
Shelter operations and public policy	20%
Professionalism	10%
Case presentation	15%
Quizzes and final examination	15%
Total	**100%**

Grading Scheme

Course grades will be assigned based on the following grading scheme. This grading scale is **final**.

Letter	Scale
A	100.00 – 94.00
A-	93.99 – 90.00
B+	89.99 – 87.00
B	86.99 – 84.00
B-	83.99 – 80.00
C+	79.99 – 77.00
C	76.99 – 74.00
C-	73.99 – 70.00
D+	69.99 – 67.00
D	66.99 – 64.00
D-	63.99 – 61.00
E	60.99 – 0

Course Policies

Participation

This course is specifically designed to be a hybrid learning experience combining both in-person and online components. Students are expected to attend all scheduled face-to-face sessions, participate actively in both in-person and virtual discussions, engage in digital activities, and take part in other interactive learning experiences across both formats. While certain live content may be recorded and made available for supplementary use, these recordings are not intended to replace attendance and engagement in either the in-person or online portions of the course. Our primary goal is to deliver a high-quality educational experience that prepares students effectively for their professional careers, which necessitates active and consistent participation in all aspects of the hybrid learning environment.

Portions of this course are delivered online through UF e-Learning (Canvas). Activities include readings, group discussions, quizzes, and assignments to deepen student understanding and assess achievement. Other portions occur during professional spay/neuter clinic operations. Students are expected to demonstrate the professionalism expected of a practice-ready veterinarian, including knowledge of subject area, compassion for people and animals, preparation, teamwork, participation, and reliability.

Due Dates

Due dates are provided on the course calendar in Canvas. Students may work ahead of schedule to complete assignments before the due date, but must meet assignment submission deadlines. Deadline extensions may be requested prior to assignment deadlines for specific unavoidable reasons such as travel, illness, or emergencies.

Technology Requirements

Required Technology includes a computer with reliable high speed internet access, compatible web browser, video player with ability to play MP4 videos, microphone, speakers and/or headphones with sound, and PDF reader. Click for more information on hardware and software necessary for Canvas. Canvas offers mobile applications for both Apple and Android products. These apps may be downloaded in the respective app stores. Depending on the device and equipment, not all Canvas features may be available on mobile devices or the app at this time. The UF Virtual Private Network (VPN), multi-factor authentication, and other security and access features are required for full access to this course and assignments and can be downloaded at no cost here.

Students must have Microsoft Office software installed and have basic skills for using Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Free Microsoft Office365 and Google G Suite software is available to all students via Gator Cloud. Visit UF Software Licensing Services to learn about other free and discounted software available to students.

Help for IT issues is available 24 hours a day from the UFIT Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 (HELP) or helpdesk@ufl.edu. Help for Canvas issues is available at 352-392-4357 or learning-support@ufl.edu. Check here for hours.

Curriculum Policies

DVM curriculum policies are consistently held and reinforced across all DVM courses. Please visit the DVM webpage and review the curriculum policies listed within the Online Student Handbook.

University Policies

All courses within the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) curriculum adhere to the University of Florida Syllabus Policies. The provided link is regularly maintained to guarantee the accuracy and consistency of these policies at UF Syllabus Policies.

Community Respect

The University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine strives to cultivate an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and open-mindedness within an exceptional community of students, faculty, and staff. It is our intent that students from varied backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of this course, and that the viewpoint of students brought to this course be considered a resource, strength, and benefit.

We intend to present materials and activities that are respectful to all. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve the course's effectiveness for you personally or for other students or student groups.

If any of our course meetings conflict with any of your religious events or practices, an excused absence will be provided when requested using the standard UF CVM Absence Request Form process as detailed in the https://education.vetmed.ufl.edu/dvm-curriculum/absence-request/ If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed any bias/treatment that falls short of these expectations, you may submit a report through the UF CVM Student Mistreatment Report.

Students with Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting www.disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. **Students in UF Health Sciences programs should be mindful that unique course accommodations may not be applicable in a clinical, fieldwork or practicum setting. Thus, planning a semester in advance with the DRC Health Sciences Learning Specialist is highly encouraged.** Our learning specialist can be contacted at the following email address: DRC@ufsa.ufl.edu**.**

The DRC is located on the main UF campus. ASA (Office for Academic and Student Affairs) works closely with the DRC to ensure student accommodations are met in the classroom and during exams. Sabrina Barot in ASA assists in coordinating exams and meeting recommended disability-related requirements for students with accommodations (sbarot@ufl.edu).

Student Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

When authorized by the course director, students may use AI technologies in the completion of coursework as long as they cite all such use by naming the technology and how it was employed. Students assume full responsibility for all content, including errors and omissions. Assistive technology authorized as part of an accommodation for a disability is always permitted.

Course instructors may adjust limitations on AI technology use and must communicate any limitations to students sufficiently in advance of the assignment due date. Failure to cite the use of AI technology or disregarding specific course limitations is considered academic misconduct. **The use of AI on assignments, essays/reflection papers, exams, and quizzes when prohibited by course or college instructions is considered cheating** and students are violating the UF Regulations 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

It is important to note that many generative AI models (e.g., ChatGPT, ChatSonic, Google Bard, etc.) place any information that they are provided with into the public domain. When using such tools, students must therefore ensure that the tools are **never provided with confidential information**. For the avoidance of doubt, the use of such tools is prohibited for generating any confidential communications, including, but not limited to, communications relating to patient records, clients, students, and intellectual property. Students are also reminded that they should always review the terms and conditions of any third-party software being used (e.g., proof reading tools) to ensure that any data the tools are provided with are appropriately protected. Students should always verify information and sources generated by AI tools. AI has inherent bias and has been known to generate false information and to cite non-existent sources. Also, because AI-generated text mines people's intellectual property without appropriate credit, this raises ethical concerns.

It is not acceptable for students to use generative AI for reflective writing, as by its very nature, the process of reflective writing demands that the individual actively engages in the writing process. Delegating this to a natural language processing algorithm may produce convincing outputs, but does not demonstrate development in an individual's professional practice.

Students are responsible for understanding their dynamic data stewardship responsibilities to minimize personal, college, and university risk. [UF Integrated Risk Management – CHATGPT Privacy, Factual Accuracy and Usage Guidelines](#)

Appendix A: Additional Instructors

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Appendix B: Other Information

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