

VEM5890 Consultations in Shelter Animal Medicine Clerkship

SEMESTER: SPRING, SUMMER, FALL 2026

CREDIT HOURS: 2 CREDIT HOUR(S)

GRADING SYSTEM: A-E GRADING

PHASE: III

Course Coordinator

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Course Instructor

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Course Description

During this 2-week elective clinical clerkship, students will participate side-by-side with Shelter Medicine faculty and expert consultants in a professional assessment visit to an animal shelter. Students will develop an understanding and appreciation for the challenges shelter leaders face while working to achieve lifesaving and welfare goals for shelter animals. Prior to visiting the shelter, students will compile and analyze information about the client shelter's animal intake, care, facilities, and outcomes. Students will then participate in an on-site* assessment of shelter operations, devising solutions for identified health and welfare concerns, and developing recommendations that improve the life-saving capacity of the shelter by encouraging best practices for animal physical and behavioral health and welfare. Students will practice communication and leadership skills by leading discussions with the consultation team on assigned assessment topics and by preparing written and in-person recommendations for shelter staff.

**On-site assessments may include up to six days of out-of-town travel depending on the shelter location. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the Shelter Medicine Program. Students will provide their own meals.*

Course Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Plan for an assessment of an animal shelter's operations and systems for population management
2. Apply professional legal and ethical standards of client confidentiality to the veterinary-client relationship between the consultation team and the client shelter
3. Collect, analyze, and report on data collected about animal populations from a shelter management software program
4. Calculate epidemiological statistics and trends related to annual and seasonal intake, length-of-stay, capacity, and outcomes for an animal shelter's population
5. Use the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters as a guide for making recommendations designed to improve medical care and animal husbandry practices in an animal shelter, including recommendations for sanitation, biosecurity, environmental controls, nutrition, patient care, medical and surgical protocols, animal handling and transport, facility design, housing, preventive health care protocols, and infectious disease control
6. Make systematic observations of an animal shelter's operations, communicate the findings, and make recommendations about how the operations might be improved or modified to promote efficient population management and improve physical and behavioral health for the sheltered animals
7. Promote the role of a shelter veterinarian as the medical director for animal shelters who is responsible for the health and welfare of both individual animals and the sheltered population
8. Prepare preliminary findings and assessments for optimizing the health, welfare, and best outcomes of sheltered animals to be used by consultants in the development recommendations and reports
9. Earn the Fear Free Shelters certification

Course Schedule

The Spring 2026 clerkship will be in Block U, February 23 - March 8, 2026

The Summer 2026 clerkship will be in Block F, July 27 - August 9, 2026

The Fall 2026 clerkship will be in Block J, September 21 - October 4, 2026

The schedule and location of each clerkship will vary according to the needs and location of the shelters. All clerkships include some time at the CVM, during which shelter information is collected and analyzed prior to the shelter visit and during which reports and follow-up communications are prepared. The clerkship also includes on-site shelter assessments, which may include up to six days of out-of-town travel depending on the location. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the Shelter Medicine Program, but students are expected to provide their own meals. Please refer to Canvas for updates and announcements to any changes to this schedule that are unique to each clerkship offering.

Required Textbooks and/or Course Materials

- The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters, Sara Pizano, ed. Provided at no cost to students. Pick up from the Shelter Medicine Office VS-3
- All other 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.

Methods of Evaluation

Students will receive daily assignments to complete as tailored to the needs of the client shelter. For each consultation topic, students will review shelter-specific data and protocols as well as professional guidance materials, including the Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, questionnaires/supporting documents from the client animal shelter, relevant shelter animal data, previous animal shelter consultation sample reports, professional webinars, and discussion groups. Students will complete Fear Free Shelters certification.

Specific graded assignments tailored to the needs of the individual shelter can be found in Canvas, but may include data analysis; protocol reviews; summaries of observations; production of SOPs, forms, or training materials; discussions; peer-reviews; commentaries on recorded presentations; and self-reflective statements.

Knowledge of subject area, professional attitude and engagement, readiness to practice, teamwork, respect, punctuality, reliability, attitude, and attendance behaviors expected of a medical professional are also included in the evaluation process. All clinicians and staff present in the clerkship contribute to the evaluation.

Several SLOs will be required during the clerkship – all students will be required to submit at least 1 successful attempt in the Curriculum Map for the following SLOs. The SLO submissions should include a description of the setting in which they were completed:

- Articulate ethical dilemmas and animal welfare issues
- Assess the history of a case involving a population of animals
- Demonstrate principles of teamwork
- Demonstrate understanding of biosecurity principles
- Demonstrate understanding of evidence-based medicine
- Identify signs of pain in a patient

Grades will be calculated based on the following:

Item	Weight
Research and Discussions	20%
Online Shelter Assessment Mentorship Program	20%
Online Fear Free Shelters Certification	10%
On-Site Shelter Assessments and Recommendations	40%
Professionalism	10%
Total	100%

Grading Scheme

All clinical clerkships at UF CVM are graded based on a modified pass/fail grading scale.

- S+ = Honors Pass/Satisfactory (the student performed beyond expectations, considering their position in the clinical year)
- S = Pass/Satisfactory (the student performed at or above the expectations)
- MS = Marginally Satisfactory (the student performed below the expectations and only narrowly passed the rotation)
- U = Unsatisfactory (the student failed the rotation, performing well below the standards considering their position in the clinical year)

Clerkship grades will be assigned based on the following clinical rotation evaluation rubric:

	Below Expectations	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient
	Below expectation for entry to clinical rotations	Meets the minimum expectation for entry to clinical rotations	Developing competence	Meets Expectation for Day-One-Practitioner-Ready Graduate	Demonstrates expertise in this area/with this skill
Problem Prioritization and Differential Diagnoses	Fails to generate a logical list of satisfactory differential diagnoses. Lack of preparation and/or lack of effort.	Focuses on client complaint. Does not recognize additional problems or generate a problem list. List of differential diagnoses is not prioritized and includes irrelevant conditions. May confuse problem list with differential diagnoses.	Develops a problem list that is predominately accurate with occasional omissions. Differential list may be excessive but demonstrates some prioritization.	Develops an accurate, prioritized problem list and differential list for common problems consistently. Clearly understands the difference between problem list and differential diagnoses.	Consistently follows systematic procedure for synthesis, comparison, and evaluation of information. Quickly filters irrelevant information and identifies unknowns.

Knowledge Base	Fails to display foundational knowledge in areas related to the specialty (individual or populations, including anatomy, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and other areas as is appropriate). Lack of preparation and/or lack of effort.	Displays limited knowledge in many areas related to the specialty (individual or populations, including anatomy, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and other areas as is appropriate). Could benefit from more review related to the specialty (individual or populations, including anatomy, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and other areas as is appropriate). Struggles to apply foundational knowledge in a comparative fashion across species.	Displays developing knowledge of a variety of common primary, secondary, and tertiary medical and/or surgical problems.	Displays solid knowledge-base and understanding of a variety of common primary, secondary, and tertiary medical and/or surgical problems. Able to think comparatively; can apply knowledge across species.	Consistently, displays superior knowledge and understanding of a variety of common primary, secondary, and tertiary medical and/or surgical problems. Exceptional knowledge of diseases related to the specialty (individual or populations, including anatomy, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and other areas as is appropriate).
Critical Thinking Skills	Logical and cohesive thought processes are absent. Fails to translate factual knowledge to clinical problem solving. Lack of preparation and/or lack of effort.	Displays limited ability to translate factual knowledge to clinical problem solving. Unable to clearly articulate thought process demonstrated.	Demonstrates logical clinical thought processes, but occasional errors noted. Satisfactory ability to translate factual knowledge to clinical problem solving, frequent guidance needed.	Demonstrates clinical thought processes that are logical and complete. Able to translate factual knowledge to clinical problem solving.	Consistently demonstrates clinical thought processes that are logical and complete. Always able to translate factual knowledge to clinical problem solving.

Communication	Fails to communicate ideas to clients and/or medical personnel, verbally or in writing. Interpersonal skills need significant improvement. Clients often misinformed or confused after speaking with student. Demonstrates inappropriate behaviors. Lack of preparation and/or lack of effort.	Limited ability to communicate in an organized manner with clients and/or medical personnel, oral and written. Clients sometimes misinformed or confused after speaking with student. Communication is timely.	Mostly able to communicate and articulate complex information to clients and/or medical personnel, oral and written.	Able to effectively communicate and articulate complex information to clients and/or medical personnel; verbal and written communication is timely and appropriate.	Consistently communicates and articulates complex information to clients and/or medical personnel exceptionally well; oral and written communication is always timely and appropriate. Listens effectively. Able to build rapport. Demonstrates confidence and ease when discussing sensitive subjects.
Professionalism, Professional Maturity, Ethical Behavior	Fails to display appropriate attitude, effort, interactions, and ethical behavior with patients, peers, staff, and faculty. Disregards feedback when offered and fails to demonstrate accurate self-assessment.	Limited self-awareness. Requires coaching on receiving and responding to feedback. Occasional use of unprofessional or non-medical language. Demonstrates satisfactory effort to maintain professionalism. Treats others with respect at all times. Occasional miscommunication with the patient care team.	Satisfactory attitude, effort, interactions, and ethical behavior. Typically mature, honest, and respectful in interactions with patients, peers, staff, and faculty. Able to receive constructive feedback but demonstrates difficulty applying feedback for self-improvement. May have occasional minor interpersonal concerns.	Demonstrates professional attitude, effort, interactions, and ethical behavior. Interactions with clients, patients, faculty, staff and peers are appropriate. Responds well to offered feedback and demonstrates improvement. Works effectively with the service team.	Consistently outstanding attitude, effort, interactions, and ethical behavior. Overtly demonstrates maturity, honesty, and respect in interactions with patients, peers, staff, and faculty. Actively seeks feedback, and makes adjustments as directed. Works effectively with the service case team.

Independent Thought Process for Decision Making	Fails to make appropriate recommendations regarding case management. Lack of preparation and/or lack of effort.	Limited ability to make recommendations without significant guidance or makes inappropriate recommendations frequently.	Demonstrates ability to make appropriate recommendations regarding case management. Needs some guidance to formulate recommendations and may be hesitant, but most recommendations are appropriate.	Demonstrates ability to make appropriate recommendations regarding case management without prompting. Able to revise recommendations based on new information.	Consistently demonstrates exceptional ability to make appropriate recommendations regarding case management. Able to revise recommendations based on new information.
Exam, Quizzes, Modules	Student failed the assignment (<60%).	Student performed poorly on the assignment (60-69%).	Student performed adequately on the assignment (70-79%).	Student performed very well on the assignment (80-89%).	Student performed at the highest level expected for the assignment (90% and above).

Course Policies

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) and through Maddie's University. Activities include readings, group discussions, quizzes, and assignments to deepen student understanding and assess achievement. Other portions occur during a professional on-site shelter consultation. 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.

October 22, 2025

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: Other Information

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Technology Help
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