



Royal Canin Vet Nurse Survey 2024: Voices from the Vet Clinic

A report on veterinary nurses and technicians' perspectives and experiences

In partnership with



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Introduction

Vet nurses and technologists make the pet world go round. These dedicated professionals have an unwavering passion for animal welfare, with each one playing a vital role in the care of our beloved pets. And in a time of veterinary shortages, their contribution has never been more important.



There are currently around 15,000 veterinary nurses in Australia and New Zealand.* While their exact responsibilities vary slightly between states and countries, they all deliver essential services like providing animal care advice, administering medications, assisting vets with examinations and treatments, undertaking surgery management tasks, and liaising with patients.

Here at Royal Canin, we want to celebrate these wonderful humans and make their voices heard, so we can better understand how to help them thrive at work and keep delivering exceptional care.

That's why we have conducted the Royal Canin Vet Nurse Survey in partnership with the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) and the New Zealand Veterinary Nurse Association (NZVNA).

Incorporating the views and experiences of 535 vet nurses and technologists, the survey helps us learn more about their career aspirations, qualifications, workplace concerns, and thoughts on the industry.

The report paints an inspiring picture of dedicated individuals who live for the welfare of animals, while offering valuable insights into how we can keep vet nurses supported, motivated, and engaged in the important work they do.

'The survey is showing nurses are seeking greater awareness and recognition of their profession, and many want to expand their roles. This is a great base to build on, and we want to support this incredible skilled workforce continue to provide great care to our pets.'

Dr Bronwen Slack, Royal Canin ANZ Chief Health Officer

*Sources: <https://www.careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/animal-care-and-conservation/animal-care/veterinary-nurse/>
<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/labour-market-insights/occupations/3613-veterinary-nurses>

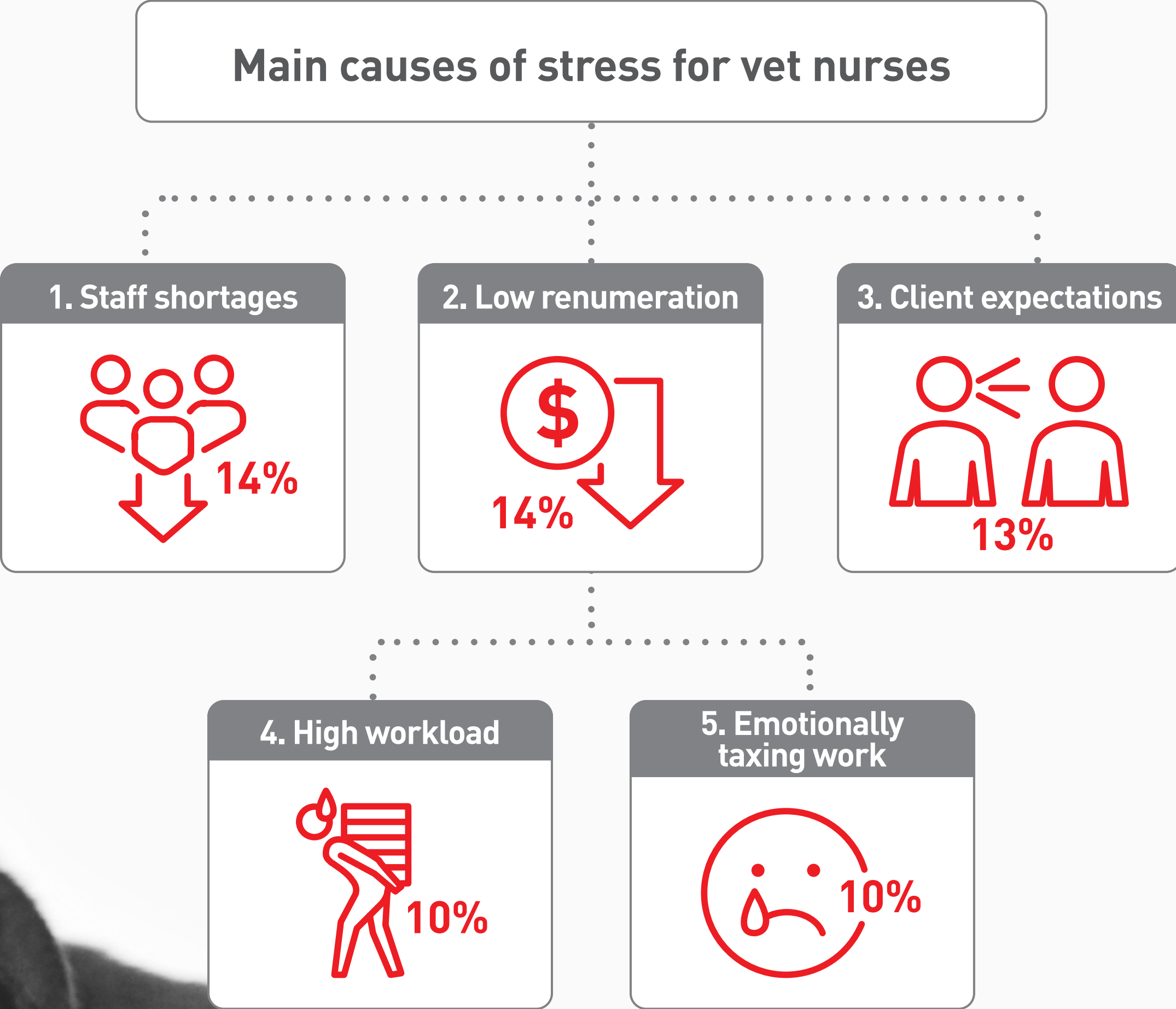


Main causes of stress for vet nurses

Looking after the wellbeing of someone's beloved furry friend, often at a challenging point in their life, naturally comes with its own stressors and concerns.

Whilst the veterinary industry is known for its high-stress environment, nurses and technicians said that their biggest causes of stress were more systemic, with **staff shortages** and **low remuneration** taking the top two spots respectively, followed by **client expectations**.

Almost eight-out-of-ten (**79%**) vet nurses said these factors impacted their motivation and passion for the industry. This demonstrates a critical need to look at ways to manage these stressors both at a clinic level and industrywide.



'Veterinary nurses play a crucial role in our industry, and their voices hold invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities that shape our future. By listening to their experiences and expertise, we can drive positive changes that not only support them but also elevate the entire veterinary industry.'

Gary Fitzgerald, President - VNCA

'Veterinary nurses are an essential part of the veterinary healthcare team, yet their role is often poorly understood by the public. Client education around their role and value will help to change the public narrative around veterinary nurses.'

Laura Harvey, President - NZVNA



Career outlook for vet nurses

Two years into their career, over half of the respondents still see a future in the industry, with 58% saying they want to keep working as a vet nurse and 36% saying maybe.

However, this changes drastically when nurses are asked the same question at the five-year mark. Only 36% say they want to stay in the industry long term and 64% want to leave or feel unsure. It's obvious that this dramatic shift needs to be examined and addressed.

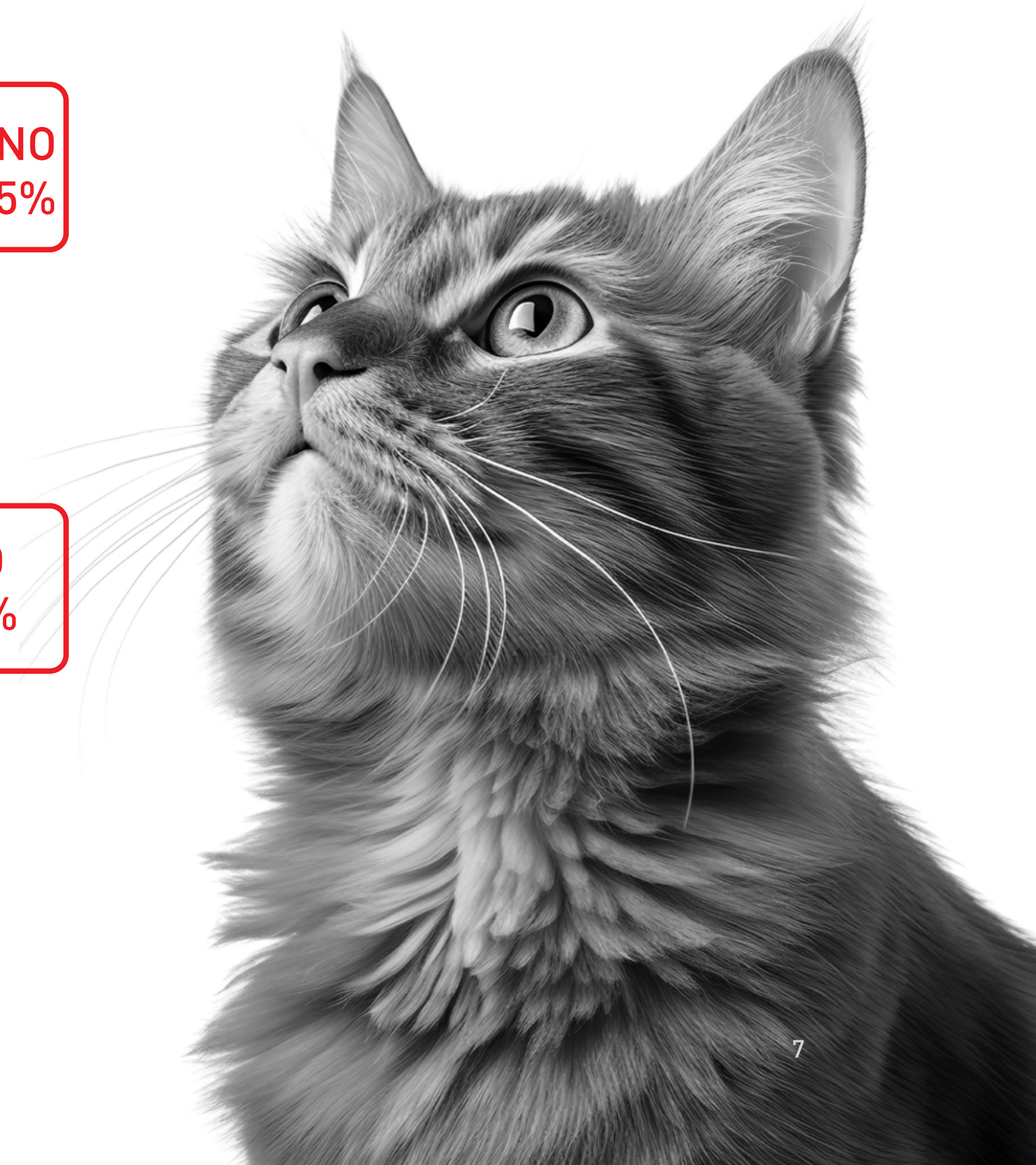
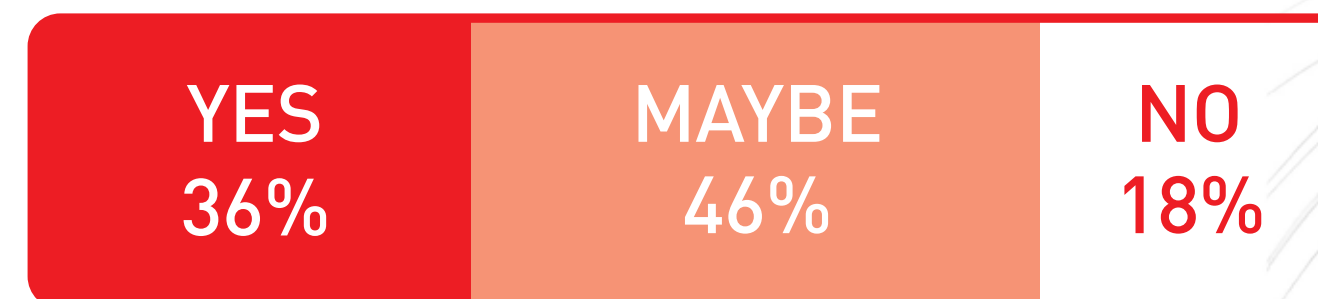
With staff-shortages already identified as a key stressor, this significant cohort of nurses wanting to leave the industry will only perpetuate the issue, leading to impacts on vet care availability and pet health.

Creating a viable and sustainable career path for vet nurses remains a critical need industry-wide.

2 Years



5 Years



How can the situation improve?

The vet nurses surveyed had valuable views on what would help improve their experiences in the industry and increase job retention, with a combination of factors coming into play.

Top of the list with 31% was awareness and recognition of the profession amongst pet owners, which was considered an important conduit to improve job satisfaction for vet nurses.

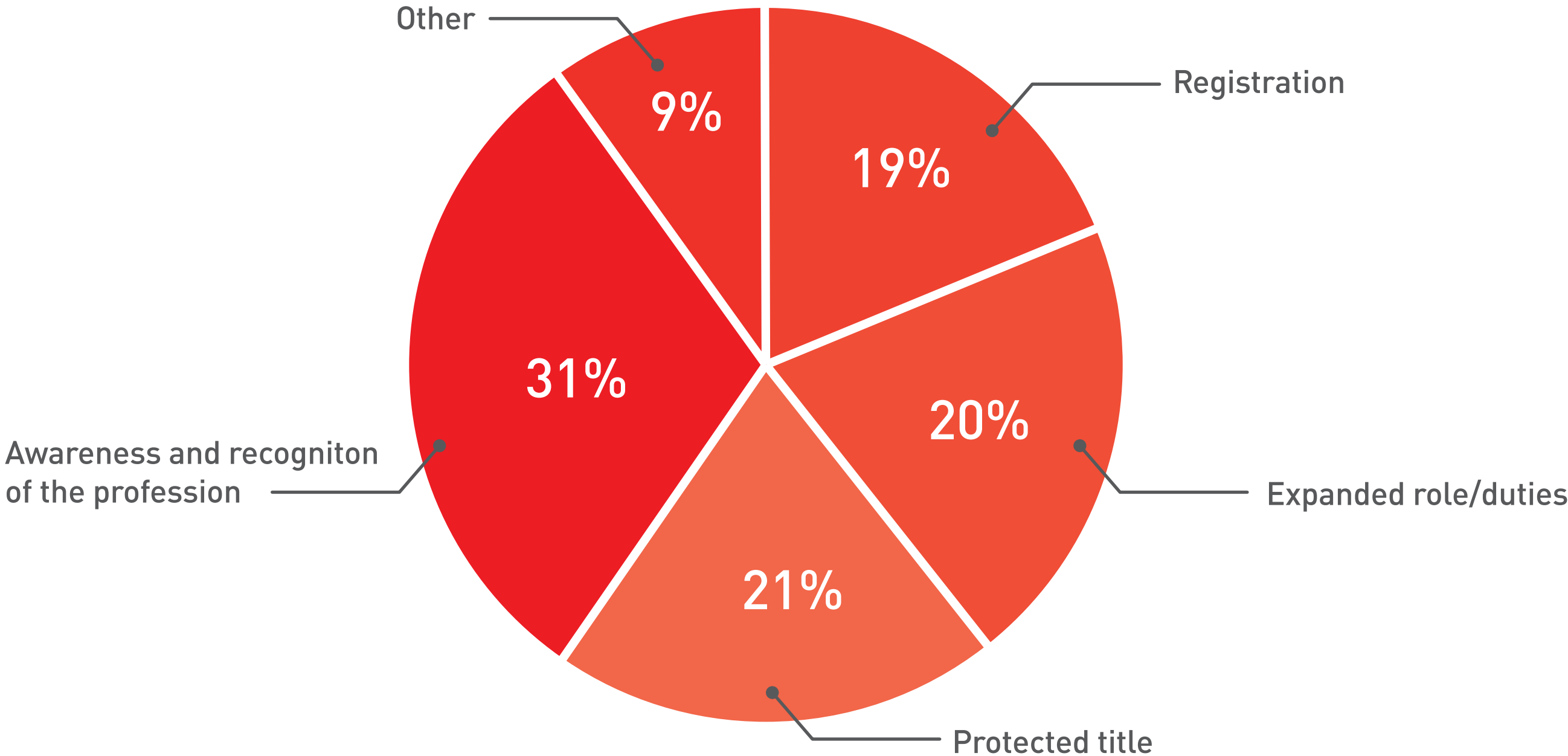
This was followed by providing more opportunities for nurses to expand their roles and learn new skills (20%). The nurses expressed a strong desire to contribute more and take on additional responsibilities.

Importantly, these challenges exist in a context where vet nurses feel that pet owners have a lower level of trust in their expertise. In fact, 89% of nurses believe that pet owners view them as only slightly or moderately knowledgeable and educated. This disconnect was identified as impacting nurses' experiences of their work.

Registration

Currently, it is not mandatory for vet nurses and technologists to be registered. However, almost half (48%) of the nurses surveyed were voluntarily registered by a professional registration body.

Compellingly, over three quarters (78%) of nurses and technologists want registration to be mandatory, with many believing this will help improve job retention. This reflects the sentiment of the 2023 survey, and shows strong and ongoing support for more formalised and structured positions.



Should registration of nurses and technicians be mandatory?



What nurses and technicians said:

'Trusted leadership and registration to help set a standard of veterinary nursing across the industry. Training and teaching through creating motivation for younger veterinary nurses. And leaders that can stand up and motivate, guide and help produce the best out of their staff members.'

'I can't tell you how often I am treated as a "receptionist" and not someone with years of knowledge. Clients are surprised to find out I run anaesthetics for their pets.'



Top preventative healthcare conversations

Vet nurses are a wealth of information for pet owners and can provide valuable advice and insights into pet care, particularly on topics of preventative health.

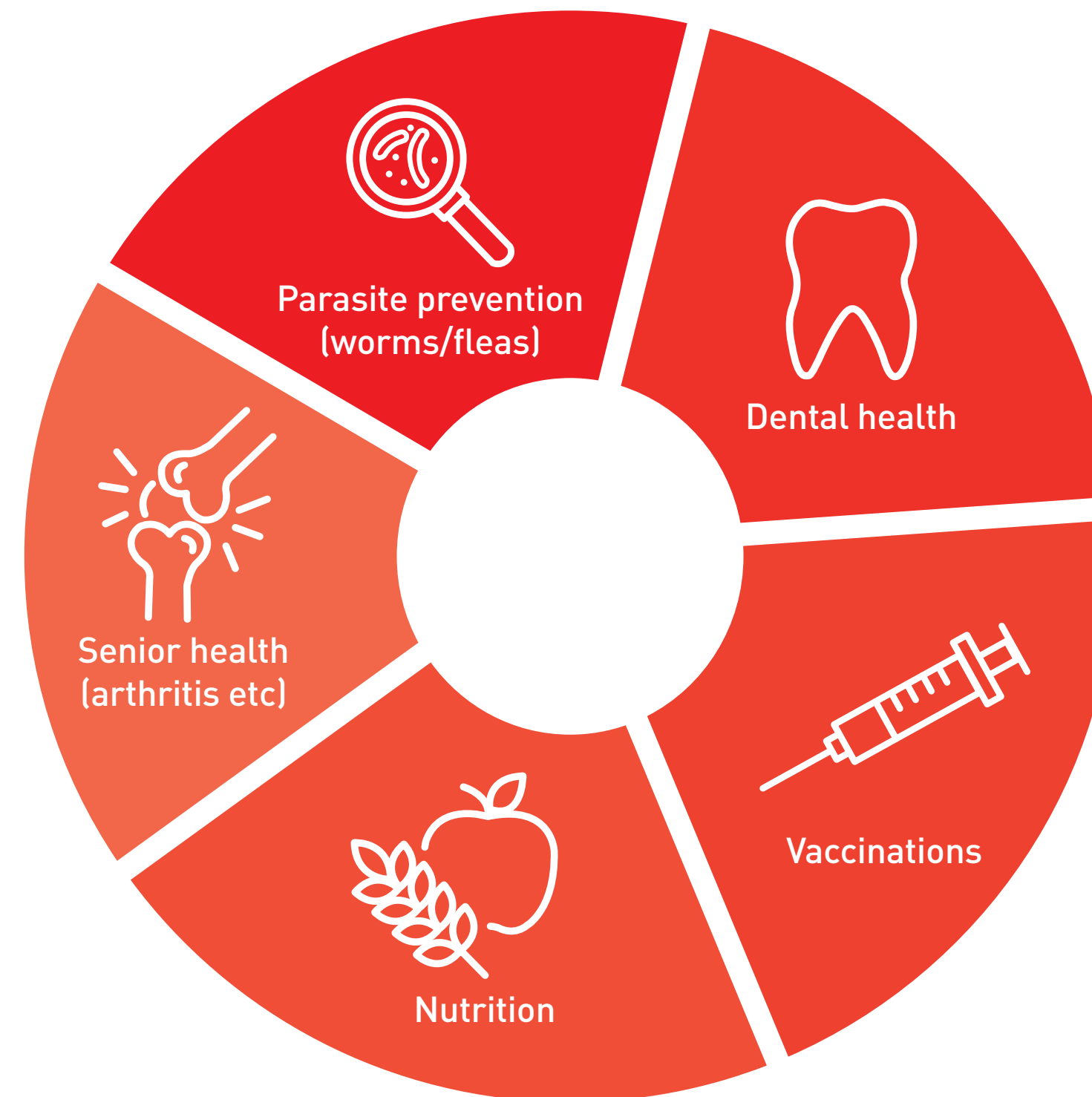
The most common subject that nurses said they provide advice on is **parasite prevention**, followed by **dental health** and then **vaccinations**.

Nutrition came in at fourth place, as owners strive to provide their pets with the best possible dietary options, and then **senior health**, for those looking after their beloved aging pets.

Despite their extensive knowledge and expertise, vet nurses feel they are often under-utilised as a source of information, putting more pressure on vets and limiting nurses from adding greater value to their roles.

This presents an opportunity for nurses to step up – something they said they are keen to do – with solutions like nurse-led clinics on nutrition to support the long-term health of pets.

Top 5 preventative health discussions nurses have with pet owners.



Top questions about nutrition

Vet nurses and technologists advised that pet owners have numerous questions about nutrition, an important aspect of pet care. Given that every animal requires proper nourishment, owners are keen to ensure their pets' nutritional needs are fully met.

The most asked question – perhaps unsurprisingly – was around **what, how much and how often to feed**. This was followed by the **cost of feeding**.

The third question was around how to manage **nutrition of overweight pets**. Unfortunately, nurses can't provide a solution for resisting puppy dog eyes!

1. What and how much/how often to feed
2. Cost of feeding
3. How to manage overweight pets – what to feed
4. Price versus quality
5. What nurses think of raw diets
6. Weight loss, GI, arthritis, dental and anxiety
7. Allergies and diet
8. Puppy nutrition
9. Renal disease
10. Feeling sick after eating new food



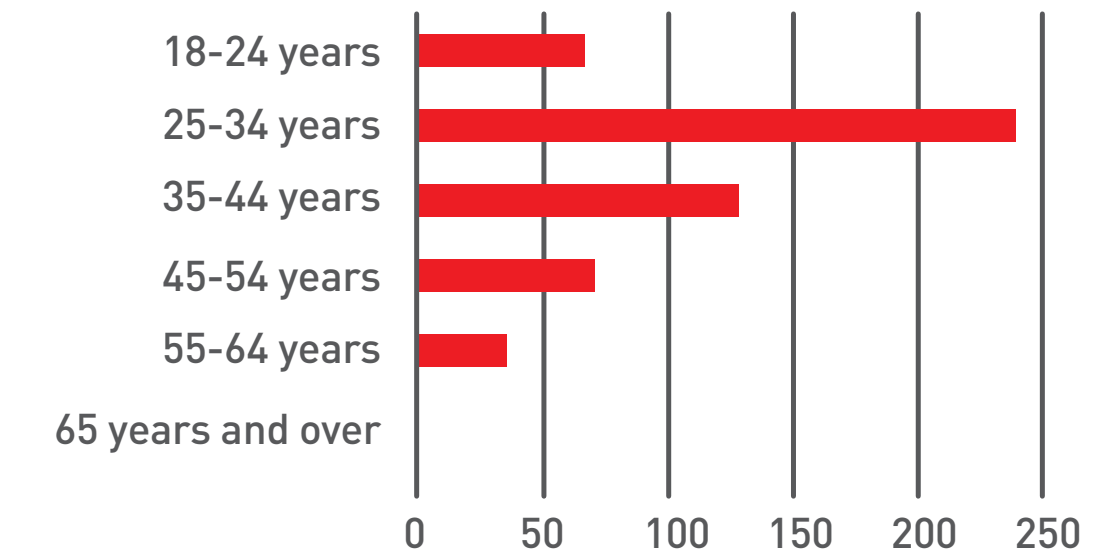
Survey respondents

A total of 535 vet professionals were surveyed for Royal Canin's Vet Nurse Survey, across Australia and New Zealand.


535
 Vet Professionals
 Surveyed

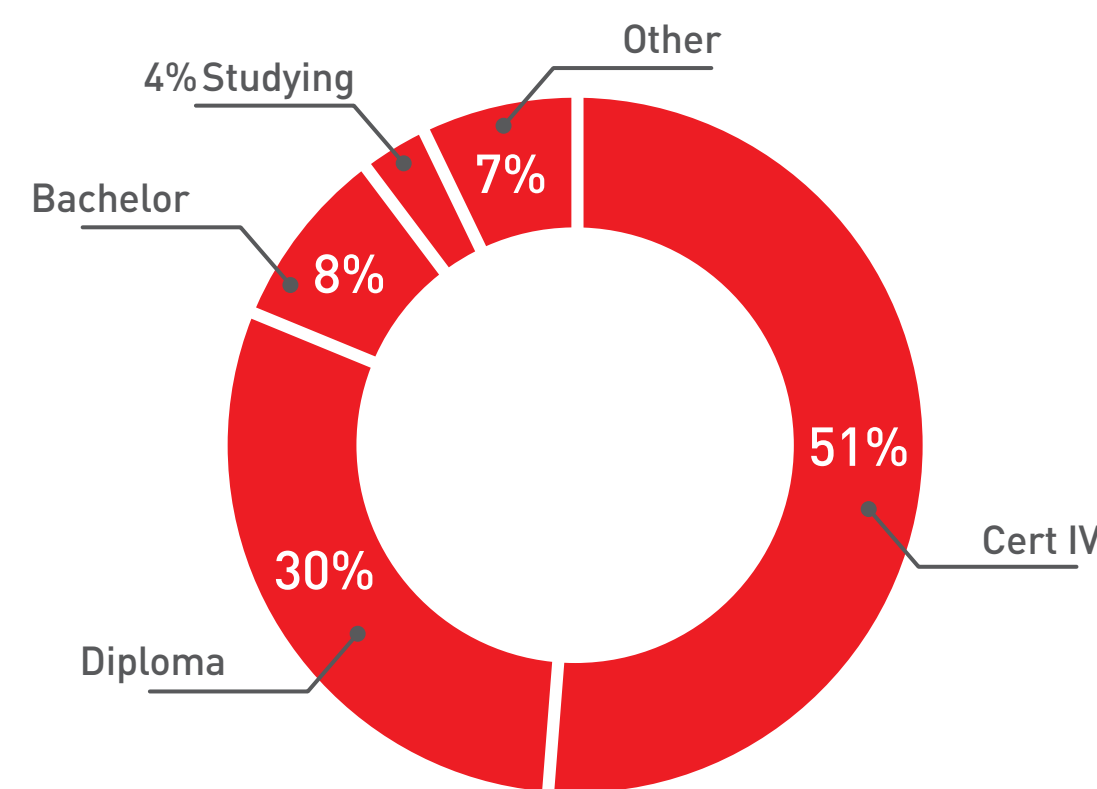
97% Female

3% Male



Qualifications

- 93% of respondents have an advanced qualification in vet nursing or are currently studying.
- Just over half of respondents hold a certificate IV in Vet Nursing.
- Those that listed 'other' often had 10+ years of in-practice experience or related qualification or training.



Registration

Just under half (48%) of those surveyed were currently registered with a registration body.



'Mandatory registration and protection of titles will provide greater support for the hardworking vet professionals in the industry, stronger recognition of the role, standardised education and a more solid career path for those in the industry.'

Gary Fitzgerald, President - VNCA



How can we support vet nurses?

Here at Royal Canin, we are passionate about empowering our vet nurses to thrive, both personally and professionally. Here are just some of the things we are doing as part of this commitment:

Emerging Leaders program

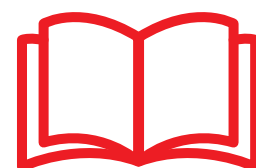
Thanks to our partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Veterinary Business, over 300 vet nurses are participating in our Emerging Leaders program. We offered members of the VNCA and NZVNA this 12-month course, which sees nurses build non-clinical skills and leadership capabilities.

It covers areas such as greater effectiveness in their roles, fostering healthier workplace relationships and enhancing their leadership, with a goal to ultimately increase job satisfaction and professional fulfillment.

VNCA & ROYAL CANIN Vet Nurse Mental Health Award

The VNCA and Royal Canin Mental Health Ambassador Award recognises an outstanding individual in the veterinary and technologist community who has shown exceptional commitment to promoting mental health.

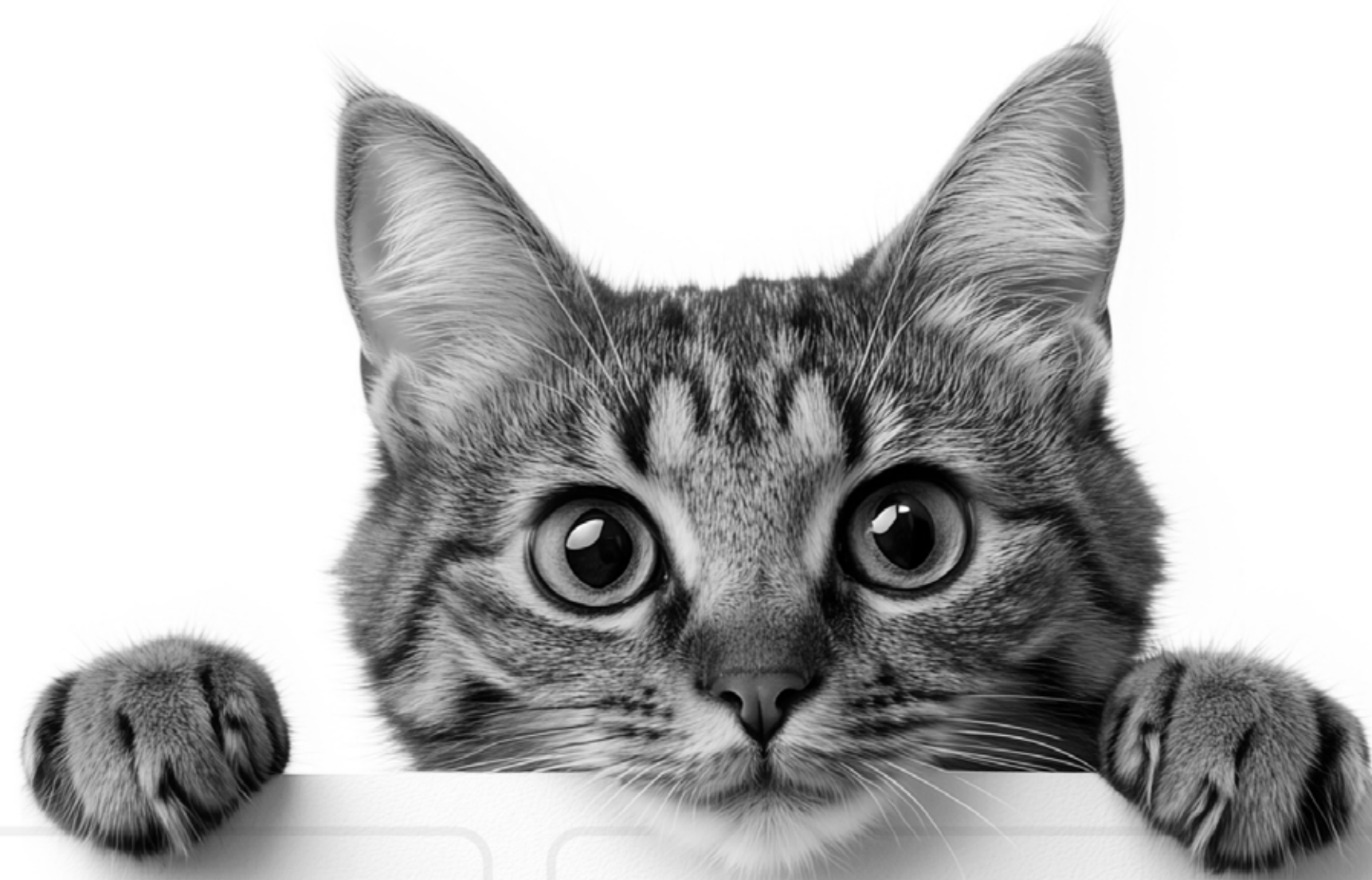
We are proud to sponsor the inaugural year of the award and congratulate our 2024 winner, Shannon Molloy. Shannon has an impressive background in mental health advocacy and currently delivers the Veterinary Nursing Animal Care and Management training unit, "Promote Positive Wellbeing in Self and Others in an Animal Care Workplace", to those studying to be a vet nurse.



**Read Shannon's incredible story here:
2024 VNCA Mental Health Ambassador**

Royal Canin Academy

In 2024, we will launch a new educational platform, ROYAL CANIN Academy. Exclusively created for vet professionals, this centre for learning will feature unique and exclusive courses around pet health nutrition, tailored specifically to the needs of veterinary nurses and technologists.



About ROYAL CANIN®

For over 55 years, ROYAL CANIN® has put nutritional quality and product safety at the heart of our operations, designing the most precise nutrition for cats and dogs. We have over 500 vets, scientists and qualified nutritionists on our team supporting the health and wellbeing of cats and dogs. We perform over 1.5 million quality checks a year on our diets and never compromise on ingredient quality. Innovation is at our core, with two leading Royal Canin research and development centres constantly looking at new ways to keep supporting the health and wellbeing of cats and dogs around the world.

For more information, please call 1800 622 969.

