

What to Call a Veterinary Degree: VS, DVS, MDV, DVM, MDC....?

Many of today's veterinary graduates might assume that their degree as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, or DVM, is the only one ever granted in North America, but such is not the case.

If graduated from a veterinary school in the United States or Canada prior to the 1930s, a veterinarian would likely have received one of a number of different degrees granted by private or state-funded veterinary colleges at that time. Among the various titles conferred by some of those veterinary schools included:

Title	Letters	Veterinary College
Bachelier en Médecine Vétérinaire	BMV	Ecole de Médecine Vétérinaire (Québec, Canada)
Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine	BVM	Iowa State College
Bachelor of Veterinary Science	BVS	Ontario Veterinary College
Bachelor of Veterinary Science	BVSc	University of Toronto
Doctort en Médecine Vétérinaire	DMV	École de Médecine Vétérinaire (Québec)
Doctor of Veterinary Dentistry	DVD	Saint Louis Veterinary Dental College
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	DVM	Most state-funded veterinary colleges
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine & Surgery	DVMS	Philadelphia College of Veterinary Surgeons
Doctor of Veterinary Science	DVS DVSc	Colorado State Agricultural College Columbia Veterinary College Columbian Veterinary College Iowa Veterinary College Kansas City Veterinary College McGill University Veterinary College National Veterinary College Ontario Veterinary College United States College of Veterinary Surgeons
Doctor of Veterinary Surgery	DVS	American Veterinary College Chicago Veterinary College George Washington University San Francisco Veterinary College
Médecine vétérinaire	MV	Laval University
Master of Veterinary Science	MVSc	Ontario Veterinary College
Medical Doctor Comparative	MDC	American Veterinary College Chicago Veterinary College
Medical Doctor Veterinary Medicinae Doctoris Veterinaire	MDV	Harvard University Veterinary School McKillip Veterinary College (Chicago)
Veterinary Medical Doctor Veterinariae Medicinae Doctoris	VMD	Indiana Veterinary College University of Pennsylvania
Veterinary Surgeon	VS	Boston Veterinary Institute Indiana Veterinary College Montreal Veterinary College New York College of Veterinary Surgeons Ohio State University Ontario Veterinary College

Sources: Schwartzkopf O. The problem of a uniform veterinary degree from the standpoint of historical development and American needs. *Am Vet Rev.* 39:148-153, 1911.

Bierer BW. Proposed national degree. *American Veterinary History*. [s.l.]: BW Bierer, 1940; pp. 115-117.

As can be imagined, the lack of a uniform title or degree for veterinary graduates created a confusing situation for the developing profession as well as for the general public, and this persisted for many years without satisfactory resolution. While the DVM degree was popular among the state-funded colleges, Bierer estimated that a total of over 3,500 VS degrees had been granted by various other schools. Furthermore, it was irksome that some “quacks” (non-graduate practitioners) assumed the VS title as well.

As early as 1885, several vocal individuals, including Professor Alexandre Liautard (1835-1918), founder of the private American Veterinary College and first editor of *American Veterinary Review*, spoke often of the value of establishing a uniform veterinary degree. In 1890, Dr. Liautard commented, “There can be but one way to remedy such an evil, and it can be, if not entirely, at least to a very great extent counteracted. This is to have but one title and a single responsible and recognized body to grant it...”

Wide discussion of this “vexatious” question arose again in or around 1910. Dr. George H. Glover (1864-1950) (Fig. 1), founding dean of the Colorado State Agricultural College veterinary program from 1907-1934, campaigned for a uniform degree along with improved matriculation requirements in a presentation at the AVMA convention in San Francisco in 1910 and again in his AVMA Presidential address in Toronto the following year. In addition to a number of editorials, Dr. Glover’s “timely and persistent efforts” prompted Dr. Olaf Schwarzkopf (1855-1923) (Fig. 2) to pen a series of in-depth articles on the history and need for uniform degrees in Europe and America. One editorial noted that Schwarzkopf “...has weighed the evidence carefully and dispassionately and looked

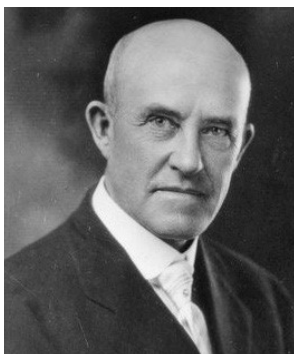


Figure 1. George H. Glover, MS, DVM. Source: Veterinary medicine at Colorado State University. <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/veterinary-medicine-at-colorado-state-university--yYGZrrFUv4xarNwvmcX-VY8rj>



Figure 2. Olaf Schwarzkopf, VMD, 1891. Photo courtesy University of Minnesota Libraries, UMedia, <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll175:17643>

at it from every viewpoint, and has finally arrived at the DVM degree by elimination.” His detailed analysis considered the DVM to be the “most correct degree, both from a standpoint of the original Latin use, as also from the adherence to it by European universities.”

Schwartzkopf attributed the non-uniformity and ensuing difficulties to “mistaken rivalry” among veterinary colleges and “untamed ideas of [material] progress.” He also suggested that schools did not fully understand the historical nature of academic degrees. Although it was widely recognized that establishing a uniform veterinary title was a desirable goal, there was apparently no serious objection to or preference for one degree over another. In addition, many felt that the actual degree conferred referred to the alma mater but was less important than raising overall educational standards and the competencies gained by those veterinary students.

By 1927, almost all of the private schools had closed, many of which had granted the widest variation in degrees. Bierer noted that, “By 1930, all state veterinary colleges had adopted a uniform title having already conferred over 3,000 DVM degrees.” It remains the accepted degree by all North American veterinary colleges, except for two. The University of Pennsylvania continues to confer the Latin version or VMD since its establishment in 1887. The Université de Montréal in Québec, Canada, confers a DMV (doctorat en médecine vétérinaire) to its graduates.

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