

Veterinarians Face High Burnout as Practices Close Across U.S.

Vet urges pet owners to understand the hidden emotional toll behind providing animal healthcare

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nearly 90% of pet owners consider their animals family members, yet most remain unaware of huge challenges facing the profession currently, from staff shortages to high burnout rates.

The veterinary profession currently faces unprecedented challenges, including critical staffing shortages that have forced emergency clinics across North America to reduce hours or close entirely. Meanwhile, the pandemic-driven surge in pet ownership has dramatically increased demand for services, creating unsustainable workloads for many practitioners.

Dr Marie Holowaychuk, a veterinary specialist with extensive experience across academia, emergency medicine and general practice, has urged pet owners to broaden their understanding of the challenges faced by those providing healthcare for their animal companions.

In her new book, [A Compassionate Calling: What It Really Means to Be a Veterinarian](#), Dr Holowaychuk reveals a profession that experiences some of the highest rates of burnout, mental health challenges and suicide risk among healthcare providers.

She explains: "It's a profession built on immense compassion and skill, but also one that requires deep resilience."

In her interviews with veterinarians, the professionals often cite their patients as being their main source of professional satisfaction. Yet this same compassionate connection creates what researchers have termed 'the paradox of compassionate work', where the relationships that bring vets happiness, also become the sources of their distress.

"It underscores the complexity of working in a profession where that which brings joy also represents one of the greatest sources of sorrow," Dr Holowaychuk explains.

Besides a gruelling workload, Dr Holowaychuk also says many veterinarians experience moral stress when financial limitations prevent them from providing optimal care. Unlike human healthcare, veterinary medicine lacks universal coverage, leaving practitioners to navigate difficult ethical terrain when pet owners cannot afford necessary treatments.

“Veterinary professionals are often left navigating these morally ambiguous and ethically challenging scenarios, which contribute to the rising levels of psychological distress within the profession,” she says.

The author also warns of the profession’s alarming burnout rates. A recent study, cited in the book, found that burnout among veterinarians costs the profession approximately \$2 billion annually in turnover and reduced productivity.

Despite these statistics, Dr Holowaychuk says many vets are reluctant to take time off or ask for help, due to mental health stigma within the profession.

“Veterinarians and other caregiving professionals have an ethical duty to take care of themselves,” she urges, warning that vets who do not sufficiently look after their own health may fall short of providing the best care to their animal patients.

In writing the book, Dr Holowaychuk aims to foster greater understanding between pet owners and veterinary professionals to help clients appreciate the emotional complexity behind the care their pets receive: “My hope is that this book not only fosters empathy for veterinarians but also inspires a future where their wellbeing is valued just as much as the care they provide.”

Further Information

A Compassionate Calling: What It Really Means to Be a Veterinarian, by Marie Holowaychuk (CRC Press, 2025)

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About the author:

Dr. Marie Holowaychuk is a veterinarian, speaker, and wellness advocate dedicated to improving mental health and wellbeing in the veterinary profession. A board-certified emergency and critical care specialist, she brings over 20 years of clinical, academic, and consulting experience, combined with a passion for fostering sustainable, fulfilling careers.

After completing veterinary school in Canada and advanced training in the United States, Marie spent five years as a faculty member at the Ontario Veterinary College, followed by relief work across North America. During her career, she not only witnessed but personally experienced the emotional and mental toll of veterinary practice, including burnout and compassion fatigue. These challenges led her to focus on wellness, burnout prevention, and workplace culture.

As the founder of Reviving Veterinary Medicine, Marie provides evidence-based resources to support self-care, effective communication, and professional resilience. She is a certified coach, yoga and meditation teacher, and wellbeing facilitator. A sought-after speaker, she has delivered

keynotes, workshops, and seminars worldwide, inspiring veterinary teams to prioritize their wellbeing.

Marie is also an accomplished writer, having published numerous articles and book chapters on veterinary medicine and mental health. She hosts the Reviving Vet Med Podcast, where she explores workplace challenges, personal growth, and strategies for creating a healthier profession.

Through her writing, speaking, and coaching, Marie is committed to fostering a culture of compassion, resilience, and support in veterinary medicine, helping professionals build careers—and lives—that are both meaningful and sustainable.

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