

NORTH CANTERBURY

INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT

Elaine McDuff is HR Manager at North Canterbury Veterinary Clinics. North Canterbury Vets began in 1954 and has expanded to now operate four clinics in the region. North Canterbury Veterinary Clinics currently employs over 70 staff, which includes veterinarians, vet nurses and assistants, technicians, sales representatives, clinic coordinators, administration and seasonal technician assistants. With serious shortages in qualified vets around the world, a large proportion of their current hiring process involves international recruits.

▼ ELAINE MCDUFF, NORTH CANTERBURY VETS



How many people have you recruited in the past five years?

Around 60, which sounds like a lot, however this includes all job families within the business, and we have a high number of seasonal staff too, who support our Large Animal Technicians.

We have been fortunate enough to experience business growth, which has allowed us to recruit to boost support within the team.

How many of these people were from overseas?

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How long does the process of recruiting someone from outside of New Zealand typically take, from job advert placement to first day on the job?

On average between 6 to 12 months. Our longest was over a two-year period due to personal commitments in the UK.

Do you specifically advertise for staff offshore? If so, why?

We have typically only advertised for veterinarians offshore due to the worldwide shortage, as well as the level of experience required for some of our key roles that may not be available in New Zealand. We tend to advertise all other roles domestically.

How does the international recruitment process differ from the domestic recruitment process?

Recruiting from overseas does add extra costs to the recruitment process, particularly when engaging with recruitment agencies. When we also include additional costs such as work visas, professional registration and reimbursement for relocation, then it can add a significant amount to the overall recruitment process.

Talk to us about visas. What visas is the employer responsible for?

North Canterbury Vets has Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) status, approved by Immigration New Zealand (INZ). As veterinarians appear on the INZ green list, it allows overseas veterinarians to apply for straight-to-residence visas.

What other legal obligations does the employer need to consider when recruiting from overseas?

Providing the support required to maintain the AEWV accreditation by Immigration New Zealand. We need to ensure the candidate's qualifications are recognised in New Zealand and that they have received the relevant professional body of registration required.

Outside of work, what is the single most important thing to your new recruits, once they have arrived?

Connectivity with family and friends, and ongoing support from the employer.

In what ways do you as an employer work to help your new recruits feel settled?

We provide connection with a work mentor and ensure we have regular follow ups with them. We have provided accommodation for the first couple of weeks at our cost when required, as well as assisting with finding a more long-term option. We help them with the process of registering with IRD, opening bank accounts, purchasing private vehicles, etc. We also offer invitations to dinner with the business owners. The team embraces new staff and openly support them by including them in social activities.

Living arrangements: what is the employer's obligation in terms of providing, sourcing or finding somewhere for your new recruit to live? How easy or difficult is this?

As mentioned, we have covered up to the first two weeks' accommodation at a local motel if required. We also support our new arrivals by using local internal and external contacts to try to help locate suitable long-term accommodation, which has been successful to date. One of our branches has a house, which is currently fully occupied. Our rural community usually have accommodation options that fit our requirements.

What other things or information is the employer obliged to provide?

We supply additional information such as local sporting groups, links to local areas of interest, links to industry related businesses or education providers, medical providers, information on New Zealand Employment, ACC, etc.

What are some other things/pieces of information that you feel are nice to provide to help your new employee?

Information on specific areas of interest, whether it is sporting, hobbies, must see places, etc. We also put them into contact with other staff that have recently emigrated, to share experiences.

What would you say is the single biggest challenge for employers in recruiting internationally?

Additional costs and perhaps concern that the candidates may not feel settled.

What would you say is the single biggest challenge for new residents moving to New Zealand to work?

The re-settlement process and the cost to emigrate to New Zealand.

What are some of the things that North Canterbury has that attracts international recruits?

Scenery, sporting and leisure activities, closeness to a big city, weather, rural outlook with a metro vibe, friendly people and a great community feel, world class vineyards, safe environment and the feeling of space.

Any other tips, tricks, suggestions or recommendations for would-be employers?

I'd suggest having current or previous staff available for applicants to chat to – to see how they describe the process, how the employer has supported them through the process, things to be aware of, etc.

Also, be prepared to spend the time to support the overseas applicants and answer any questions they may have. Touch base regularly with your new arrival to make sure they feel settled and part of the team.