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Empathy towards animals and people: the role of gender and length of service in a sample of Italian vets

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16 **Abstract**

17

18 Empathy plays an important role in interpersonal relationships and it also shapes the relationship
19 between human and non-human species, affecting the way animals are treated and cared for.

20 Veterinarians play a key role in regard to animal welfare and, especially in companion animal
21 practice, they have to care for "non-human patients" as well as for "human clients", showing

22 sensitivity and empathy towards both. However, empathy in veterinary professionals has received
23 very little attention so far.

24 This study investigated empathy towards animals and people in veterinarians, assessing whether
25 and to what extent they are influenced by variables such as gender and length of service. In fact,
26 these variables have been reported to affect empathy in a variety of caring professions.

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