

## **Using Writing Assignments to Improve Student Learning in Epidemiology**

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The teaching of epidemiology to professional veterinary students poses several challenges. Veterinary students are engaged in a curriculum that is demanding and content-dense. Epidemiology competes for student time and attention with courses such as physiology, anatomy, and pharmacology that students see as much more relevant to their future career as veterinarians. In addition, concepts in epidemiology often seem obvious to students until they try to put them into practice. This paper describes the use of writing assignments as one strategy for meeting these challenges. The writing assignments are designed both to increase student recognition of the value of epidemiology and to facilitate their mastery of key epidemiological concepts. Each assignment is accompanied by a scoring rubric that articulates and explains the criteria by which the assignment will be evaluated. The rubrics guide students in assessing their own and their peers' work. The paper will show example writing assignments and corresponding rubrics, as well as evidence of their effect on student learning.