

## Features of Qualifiers in English for Veterinary Medicine: forms, functions and usage

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✧ a qualifier gives much information about a noun:

- *aged horse*
- *anti-infective drugs*
- *infectious disease*
- *heavy rain*
- *mild fever*
- *wild fauna or wildlife*
- *slight stomach ache*
- *thorough examination*

in order to choose the adequately correct adjective(s) in front a given personal and/or general noun, please refer to your dictionary as well as to <http://www.ozdic.com/>

→ → → → lexical collocations

For example, even if "domestic" is widely used by veterinarians with the following meaning: "3 (of animals) kept on farms or as pets; not wild"<sup>1</sup>, it has sometimes both the meanings reported in the sentences below:

- **Domestic** red meat and poultry production is expected to decline through 2013 but increase overall by 2021<sup>2</sup>,
- [...] **domestic** and foreign drug manufacturing plants are routinely inspected for compliance with applicable regulations, including the Current Good Manufacturing Practices<sup>3</sup>,

where it stands for "[usually before noun] of or inside a particular country; not foreign or international"<sup>4</sup>; while, when you find:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/> at the item "domestic".

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/120401j.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> FDA Basics, October 19, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/> at the item "domestic".

- Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome Virus among **Domesticated** Animals, China. [...] To investigate the infections of severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome virus (SFTSV) in **domesticated** animals, we sampled a total of 3,039 animals in 2 counties in Shandong Province, People's Republic of China, from April to November 2011. [...] The most common **domesticated** animal species in the region include sheep, cattle, dogs, pigs, and chickens<sup>5</sup>;
- Alveolar echinococcosis usually occurs in a wildlife cycle between foxes, other carnivores and small mammals (mostly rodents). **Domesticated** dogs and cats can also be infected<sup>6</sup>;

the qualifier "**domesticated**" means "1 (of a wild animal) used to living with or working for humans"<sup>7</sup>.

In other contexts, such a qualifier is a synonym for "2 cultivated; (of a plant or crop) grown for human use"<sup>8</sup>:

- the **domesticated** strawberry.

❖ **no gender at all**

→ → compare possessive adjectives on your own grammar;

❖ **singular and plural forms are always the same**

→ → compare demonstrative and possessive adjectives on your own grammar;

❖ **uses *highly*, *very* or *really* to make a qualifier or an adverb stronger, thus building an absolute superlative:**

- Cats have claws that are **much more highly** adapted and complex than in the dog. Feline claws are **very** sharp and curved, which makes it easier to grasp prey while hunting or to slash during fights over territory.
- Acute bloat from petroleum products in ruminants has been reported after consumption of **highly** volatile hydrocarbons such as gasoline or naphtha.

<sup>5</sup> [www.cdc.gov/eid/article/19/5/pdfs/12-0245.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/eid/article/19/5/pdfs/12-0245.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs377/en/>

<sup>7</sup> In fact, the regular verb "to domesticate", usually used in its passive voice, means "to make a wild animal used to live with or work for humans": "Mammals were first domesticated for their milk" (<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/> at the item "domesticated").

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

- Gerbils are known for their curious and mild temperament. Because they have almost no odor, require **very** little space, and are easy to care for, they make excellent pets. Gerbils are **very** social creatures, so they do best in the company of other gerbils.

**even if some other adverbs of manner can be used in order to build an absolute superlative as in the following:**

- **Severely** ill patients require intensive supportive care.
- A vaccine, like any medicine, could cause a serious reaction. But the risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is **extremely** small.
- **Most interestingly**, about 20 percent of owned cats leave households and become strays, and about 22 percent of households acquire their cats as strays.
- The living systems used to produce biologics can be sensitive to very minor changes in the manufacturing process. Small process differences can significantly affect the nature of the finished biologic and, **most importantly**, the way it functions in the body.

✧ **when a modifier, always comes before the noun (modified), but ... pay attention to word-clusters<sup>9</sup> such as *diabetes mellitus* and *diabetes insipidus*, exemplifying the so called "anastrophe" or "inversion". Here follows some other examples with the equivalent in 'common' English in brackets, a short explanation and the equivalent in Italian in the footnotes:**

- *Apthae Epizooticae* (foot-and-mouth disease, FMD / hoof-and-mouth disease, HMD)<sup>10</sup>
- *fovea centralis* (central depression)<sup>11</sup>
- *genu valgum* (bow-legged knee / knock-knee)<sup>12</sup>
- *locus caeruleus* (blue place)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Even if they are undoubtedly "**lexical collocations**" since they are made of a qualifier plus a noun, we have called them "**syntactic collocations**" because what is compulsory is the word order.

<sup>10</sup> An infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals, including domestic and wild bovids. The virus causes a high fever for approximately two to six days, followed by blisters inside the mouth and on the feet that may rupture and cause lameness. **Equivalent in Italian:** "afta epizootica".

<sup>11</sup> A small, central pit composed of closely packed cones in the eye, located in the center of the macula lutea of the retina. **Equivalent in Italian:** "fovea centrale".

<sup>12</sup> A condition in which the knees angle in and touch each other when the legs are straightened. **Equivalent in Italian:** "ginocchio valgo".

- *macula lutea* (yellow spot)<sup>14</sup>
  - *status asthmaticus* (asthmatic status)<sup>15</sup>
  - *status epilepticus, SE* (epileptic status)<sup>16</sup>
  - *vena cava* (hollow vein)<sup>17</sup>
  - *Variola Major* (= a variola virus variant that caused the severe and most common form of smallpox)
  - *Variola Minor* (= also known as "Alastrim", it was the milder strain of the variola virus that caused smallpox, eradicated in 1980 by a global campaign)<sup>18</sup>
  - *vas deferens* (carrying-away duct)<sup>19</sup>
- ✧ **has a paradigm of its own, made up of the higher, lower and same degree comparative; and the absolute and relative superlative;**
- ✧ **short and long qualifiers (and adverbs of manner as well<sup>20</sup>) must be distinguished in order to build up higher degree comparative and relative superlative forms; in fact, short adjectives have a specific paradigm using the endings **-er** and **-est** respectively. Please look at the table below:**

<sup>13</sup> Also spelled *locus coeruleus* or *locus ceruleus*, it is a nucleus in the pons of the brainstem involved with physiological responses to stress and panic. It is a part of the reticular activating system. **Equivalents in Italian:** *locus coeruleus*, "punto blu".

<sup>14</sup> From Latin *macula*, "spot" + *lutea*, "yellow". An oval-shaped pigmented area near the center of the retina of the human eye and some other animalian eyes. **Equivalents in Italian:** *macula lutea*, "macula".

<sup>15</sup> **Acute severe asthma** is an acute exacerbation of asthma that does not respond to standard treatments of bronchodilators (inhalers) and corticosteroids.

<sup>16</sup> A single epileptic seizure lasting more than five minutes or two or more seizures within a five-minute period without the person returning to normal between them. **Equivalents in Italian:** *status epilepticus*, "stato epilettico".

<sup>17</sup> Two large veins (venous trunks) that return deoxygenated blood from the body into the heart. Pay attention to its plural form: *venae cavae*. **Equivalent in Italian:** "vena cava".

<sup>18</sup> **Smallpox** (**Equivalent in Italian:** "vaiolo") was an infectious disease caused by one of two virus variants, *Variola major* and *Variola minor* (**Equivalents in Italian:** "Variola maior" and "Variola minor"). The last naturally occurring case was diagnosed in October 1977 and the World Health Organization (WHO) certified the global eradication of the disease in 1980.

<sup>19</sup> The tube through which sperm pass from the testis on their way out of the body. Pay attention to its synonym "ductus deferens", and the plural form of both: *vasa deferentia* and *ductus deferentes* respectively. **Equivalent in Italian:** "dotto deferente", "canale deferente", "vaso deferente".

<sup>20</sup> Note that it is not possible to have comparatives or superlatives of certain adverbs – especially those of time (e.g. *yesterday, daily, then, etc.*), place (e.g. *here, up, down, etc.*), and degree (e.g. *very, really, almost, etc.*).

examples of short adjectives (or adverbs)	higher degree comp.	relative superlative
cheap	cheaper (than)	the cheapest
deadly	deadlier (than)	the deadliest
early	earlier (than)	the earliest
high /haɪ/	higher (than)	the highest
healthy	healthier (than)	the healthiest
mild	milder (than)	the mildest
naive [also naïve] <sup>21</sup> /naɪ'ɪv/	naiver (than)	the naivest
rough /rʌf/	rougher (than)	the roughest
young /jʌŋ/	younger (than)	the youngest
examples of long adjectives (or adverbs)		
acute /ə'kjuːt/	more acute (than)	the most acute
careful	more careful (than)	the most careful
contagious	more contagious (than)	the most contagious
difficult	more difficult (than)	the most difficult
effective	more effective (than)	the most effective

<sup>21</sup> Look at the following excerpt from <https://www.oie.int/> to discover and bear in mind the meaning of such a qualifier in VetMed English: "[...] Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that primarily affects cloven-hooved livestock and wildlife. Although adult animals generally recover, the morbidity rate is very high in **naïve** populations, and significant pain and distress occur in some species. Sequelae may include decreased milk yield, permanent hoof damage and chronic mastitis. [...]". Thus, it stands for "not exposed to disease through prior exposure or vaccination (maybe because too young)".

<b>human</b> <sup>22</sup> /'hju:mən/	<b>more human (than)</b>	<b>the most human</b>
<b>humane</b> /hju:'meɪn/	<b>more humane (than)</b>	<b>the most humane</b>
<b>interesting</b>	<b>more interesting (than)</b>	<b>the most interesting</b>
<b>examples of adjectives with a double paradigm</b>		
<b>acute</b> /ə'kju:t/	<b>acuter (than) / more acute (than)</b>	<b>the acutest / the most acute</b>
<b>deadly</b>	<b>deadlier (than) / more deadly (than)</b>	<b>the deadliest / the most deadly</b>
<b>healthy</b>	<b>healthier (than) / more healthy (than)</b>	<b>the healthiest / the most healthy</b>
<b>mature</b> / mə'tʃʊr/, /mə'tʊr/	<b>maturer (than) / more mature (than)</b>	<b>the maturest / the most mature</b>
<b>risky</b>	<b>riskier (than) / more risky (than)</b>	<b>the riskiest / the most risky</b>
<b>severe</b> /sɪ'viə(r)/	<b>severer (than) / more severe (than)</b>	<b>the severest / the most severe</b>

The adjectival paradigm of a short qualifier can be described as synthetic; while the adjectival paradigm of a long qualifier can be described as analytic or periphrastic.

**Pay also attention to the following "irregular" adjectival/adverbial paradigms:**

<b>bad / ill /badly</b>	<b>worse (than)</b>	<b>the worst</b>
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<sup>22</sup> Here follows the meanings of "human" as a qualifier according to the <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>:

- "1) [only before noun] of or connected with people rather than animals, machines or gods;
- 2) showing the weaknesses and desires that are typical of people, which means that other people should not criticize the person too much;
- 3) having the same feelings and emotions as most ordinary people".

⇒⇒⇒⇒ compare the qualifier "humane",  
Unit 1, a.y. 2024/2025;  
and "human" as a noun, Unit 5, a.y. 2024/2025)

good /well	better (than)	the best
far	farther/further <sup>23</sup> (than)	the farthest/furthest
late	later / latter	the latest / the last
little	less (than)	the least <sup>24</sup>
much	more	the most
near	nearer	the nearest / the next
old	older/elder (than),	the oldest/the eldest <sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, pay attention to the adjectives **former**<sup>26</sup> and **latter**<sup>27</sup> when they occur together in the pronominal expression "**the former ... the latter**"<sup>28</sup>; when occurring alone, **the latter** stands for the Italian "quest'ultimo/a".

<sup>23</sup> Combined with "more", "further" forms the solid compound adverb *furthermore*, a synonym of *moreover* and *additionally*, that stands for the Italian "inoltre".

<sup>24</sup> Pay attention to "least" when it collocates with "at": *at least* is a grammatical collocation and stands for the Italian "almeno". Look at the following examples:

- "[...] Noroviruses belong to the family *Caliciviridae* and can be grouped into five genogroups (GI through GV), which are further divided into **at least** 34 genotypes. [...]";
- "[...] Since 2004, **at least** 4 cases of rabies in recently imported dogs have been reported, emphasizing the need for continued surveillance and preventive measures. [...]";
- "[...] Every year, more than 800,000 Americans receive medical attention for dog bites; **at least** half of them are children. [...]"

<sup>25</sup> *Elder* and *eldest* mean the same as *older* and *oldest*. We only use the adjectives **elder** and **eldest** before a noun as qualifiers, and usually when talking about relationships within a family or a group: *Let me introduce Susan. She's my elder sister.*

We also use *elder* and *eldest* as nouns: *Jack is the eldest of four brothers.*

**Older** and **oldest** are used in similar ways: *My older sister is coming to stay with us at the weekend; Matt is the oldest of our children and Simon is the youngest.*

*Older* and *oldest* can be used to refer to the age of things more generally: *The town hall is by far the oldest building in the whole region.*

We can use *older* and *oldest* as predicative adjectives: *I think her grandfather must be older than her grandmother.*

<sup>26</sup> **Equivalents in Italian:** "ex", "precedente", "primo".

<sup>27</sup> **Equivalents in Italian:** "ultimo", "finale".

<sup>28</sup> **Equivalent in Italian:** "il/la primo/a ... il/la secondo/a".

## ORDER OF ADJECTIVES

When several adjectives come before a noun, they are usually put in a more or less **fixed order**.

Adjectives **expressing opinions** usually come before adjectives that simply describe:

**OPINION ADJECTIVE(S) + FACT ADJECTIVE(S) + NOUN**

Within the category of the so-called "fact adjectives", a further order needs to be observed as outlined below:

**SIZE > AGE > SHAPE > COLOUR > ORIGIN > MATERIAL > PURPOSE**



## Look at the following examples:

- A faithful big dog
- A smart middle-aged veterinarian
- The Bracco is a versatile short and brown-haired Italian gun dog.
- A fat old white horse
- A small old short-legged French Basset-hound
- A small new black Italian leather medical bag