



## The Primary Goal for Observing Veterinarians and/or Scientists

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions in life. This single decision is based upon one's values and aspirations, one's self expectations and talents, consideration of costs (both money and time), and concern about how the choice will impact one's personal and family life. To select to pursue a career in veterinary medicine includes all of these considerations and is, in a word, a complex effort.

Observing, job shadowing, volunteering for or working for veterinarians or scientists offers an opportunity to discover how these professionals spend the day, how they put each day together, how they allow time for the unexpected, stay current in their field, integrate their personal and professional life. In addition, depending on issues specific to the area of work (companion animal practice, food production animal practice, equine practice, corporate research) such experiences can impact *exactly* how one will use their career education in the future. These experiences are vital to good career decision making and are given great consideration by Admission Committees when one writes an application for admission to veterinary school.

The primary goal for job shadowing, observing and other experiences with veterinarians and scientists is to **LEARN SOMETHING**. Just being able to list what was seen or heard in a setting is not adequate. Veterinary Medicine is a science based, medical career and you want to find out what that means. Even the very important skills acquired by those who have been employed by veterinarians (running "fecals", drawing blood, setting catheters, etc.) are not the prime learning of the experience.

As an observer you should always be asking, "***What did I learn, from the time spent, about the science and medicine of veterinary work?***"

Examples of what such learning might include follow:

\*What did your microbiology course allow you to understand about aseptic technique in clinics?

\*What are the similarities or differences in the medicine practiced on horses, cows, wildlife, domestic cats, zoo animals?

\*What application or impact will the corporate research you observed have on nutrition for dogs and was there something familiar about this research that came from course work you have completed?

A good suggestion is to keep a journal of your experiences and the reflections you have about those experiences. Journaling is an excellent way to record facts, thoughts and feelings while they are fresh. It can become a life long habit that provides a reflective vision about your life's work...a valuable point of view. If nothing more, the journal will be a very useful resource as you complete your professional school application. You might even want to share the goal you have for your observation or job shadowing with the person(s) you visit. This can offer them the opportunity to feel comfortable about being in a "teaching" role with you and you may both enjoy the experience even more.

If you have questions about the goal of experiences with veterinarians or scientists for your application for admission to veterinary school, please feel free to contact:

Academic and Student Affairs  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
[marykelm@uiuc.edu](mailto:marykelm@uiuc.edu) or [admissions@uiuc.edu](mailto:admissions@uiuc.edu)  
217-333-1192