

Preceptorships: Where, When, and Who is Doing Them?

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Welcome to the incoming Class of 2003 and congratulations for being chosen to attend ISU College of Veterinary Medicine. Be sure to take lots of notes, ask lots of questions both in and out of class, don't be afraid to ask for help (fear can be your undoing) and above all, **DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF!**

What is a preceptorship? The word preceptor means "tutor" and during your fourth year, you will be given the chance to travel outside the walls of our beloved institution to receive instruction and credit that applies toward your DVM degree in areas that interest you.

This article was originally going to cover several students from the current graduating class and the preceptorships that they have attended. That's it, one story, five or six students - but, when I started to think about all the students in my class alone, and what I understand their interests to be, I decided to concentrate on only two of our current fourth year veterinary students so I could write a little more in depth about their experiences and how they arranged them. I will cover other preceptorships in upcoming issues.

Interview with David Cox

Dave was born and raised in the Des Moines area. His grandfather is a MD and Dave was drawn toward the medical profession, but decided that he would rather practice on animals than on people. Dave's sense of humor is definitely going to keep his clientele on their toes and insure that he has a great career as a veterinarian. His interests tend toward avian, canine, and feline medicine.

Dave did a preceptorship in Glasgow, Scotland, at the University of Glasgow Veterinary College. ISU College of Veterinary Medicine has an affiliation with the University of Glasgow. Students from ISU pay our regular tuition and get to attend school in Scotland. Dave spent time in Scotland from mid-January to late February, 1999.

ISU Vet: Tell us a little about your veterinary/learning experience in Scotland.

Dave: The school has a slower pace. It is a

100% referral institution so you don't see any of the primary care that you see at Iowa State. I saw one spay and two neuters in the six weeks that I was there. You tend to get what other vets are unable or unwilling to deal with, including problem clients. The slower pace allows fewer cases per student and the added benefit of following each case from start to finish and getting a stronger understanding of what is actually happening to your patient. This really helped in one of my cases. A dog came in with a diffuse neurological disorder. Unlike at ISU, where I would have several cases to deal with, I had just this one case for two days and could really concentrate on the problem at hand. I was able to get an in-depth understanding of the case. There is, however, a chance that you will spend too much time on one case and become bored with it. All in all, I felt that it is a good way to learn. I especially liked the large support staff of vet techs and nurses. I didn't have to clean a single cage or come in late in the evening to check on patients.

ISU Vet: Is there any one case that sticks out in your mind?

Dave: There was a case of a rather large boxer that I was presented with that had a large epulis on its lower dental arcade. I was actually able to observe this lesion as the dog was lunging and snarling at me from the end of the owner's leash. We diagnosed the extent of the growth and decided to do a rostral mandibulectomy. The funny thing about the situation was as soon as you got the dog away from its owner, it turned into a giant ball of fluff. You could do anything that you wanted to him. When daddy was around, he was very tough. Even though part of his lower jaw was removed, he got along fine afterward.

ISU Vet: You had to have had some leisure time, what did you do?

Dave: I love to travel and I especially like to walk at night in Glasgow, until someone told me that it was not advised. I had a great time discovering local pubs and shops and seeing how the city was not designed with two lanes of automobile traffic in mind. I also took a three-day bus tour throughout Scotland, called a Haggis tour. We left Edinburgh through the Highlands of Scotland, up the east coast to the north to the Isle of Skye, and returned via

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Right: Valley where “Braveheart” was filmed, the town used in the film has since been removed because of problems with tourists overrunning the area.



Dave Cox, VM4, ISU



Dave Cox, VM4, ISU

Left: Mel Gibson? Is that you? No, just Dave doing his best imitation of William Wallace. The photo of the “Braveheart” valley above was taken from this position.

a different route through the Highlands. The bus drivers were excellent tour guides and provided wonderful historical information on the area through which we were traveling.

ISU Vet: When did you set up your preceptorship?

Dave: I received a note in my mailbox during the fall of my Junior year stating that there were preceptorships available in Glasgow, Scotland. The University of Glasgow is our sister school. I thought it was a great idea, so I decided to pursue it.

ISU Vet: Was that part of CIVO (Committee for International Veterinary Opportunities)?

Dave: I don't think so, but that's a good place to start if you are interested in international opportunities. I basically had all of my travel arrangements planned out well ahead of time. Dr. Reece was in charge of the program. But since his retirement, Kelly Hilbrands, who works in the clinics, helped me out. There is money available for this program at times, but there were currently other programs such as the veterinary acupuncture course in China that were competing for funds.

ISU Vet: Any advice for the new students and those wanting to pursue a preceptorship?

Dave: Go for it, it's a good time.

Interview with Jeb Mortimer

Jeb is a fourth-year veterinary student with an interest in exotics. If you have ever met him, you can not believe that he will be anything but a great vet. He did his first preceptorship at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., and he is also scheduled to travel to an exotic animal practice in Portland, Oregon.

ISU Vet: When did you decide you wanted to become a vet?

Jeb: I was originally interested in environ-

mental consulting and decided becoming a veterinarian would make me more marketable. I actually had no intention of practicing medicine, but now, I am hooked on the medicine and there is no looking back.

ISU Vet: You have an interest in exotics. Where did that come from?

Jeb: In high school, I worked for a marine aquarium where I got a lot of experience in training marine mammals. I also volunteered at some zoos, spent some time in Africa, and at Baylor University, I was in charge of taking care of their mascot, a black bear.

ISU Vet: What do you think about the exotics programs at ISU CVM?

Jeb: There really wasn't much going on when I got here, but the Zoo, Exotic, and Wildlife (ZEW) club is doing some really great things. The wetlabs with Dr. Carpenter that Dean Uhlenhopp set up are phenomenal. Exotic animal medicine education at ISU is much better than it used to be. The ZEW Club has helped to make ISU a good place for those interested in exotics. I think that there are a lot of opportunities for all students, not just for seniors, but you just have to find them. The curriculum is slowly getting better, but what we need is an exotics clinician to draw more exotic patients into the clinics. It will happen, but it will take time.

ISU Vet: Who do you suggest contacting if you are interested in exotic animal medicine?

Jeb: Dr. Thoen, Dr. Cheville, Dr. Kluge, and Dr. Brown have all been great and have provided lots of useful information.

ISU Vet: Let's explore more about your preceptorship and how you arranged it?

Jeb: I did my preceptorship at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. While there, I did a lot of physicals on great apes and reproductive exams on the Komodo Dragons. I also spent time monitoring anesthesia and draw-

ing blood during various procedures. Working up the clinical cases was very interesting and challenging. I participated in cases and procedures including: auto-immune problems in sea lions, mastitis in an elephant, trunk washing to test for TB in elephants, and the introduction of a male one-horned asian rhino to its prospective mate. A research project was mandatory for this preceptorship. It was a great working environment but also very professional with frequent questions asked to test my veterinary knowledge. I enjoyed the experience a lot. The experiences that really stand out in my mind have to do with an orangutan that was under light anesthesia and woke up on the table and the time I cut my finger on the tooth of the Komodo Dragon. It was a unique and varied experience.

ISU Vet: How did you go about setting up your preceptorship?

Jeb: I called the National Zoo on my own to get the ball rolling, but Dr. Thoen was a big help in getting me there. I think they finally gave me a position so I would quit bothering them.

ISU Vet: And financing your trip?

Jeb: The National Zoo does not supply any monetary support, but they did arrange a place for me to stay. There are, however, ways to receive money such as the Hills fund and international funds both at Vet Med and on main campus. If you do the foot work and ask a lot of questions, you will find the information you need.

ISU Vet: Any advice to the incoming freshmen?

Jeb: Take any opportunity that arises to attend outside programs and meetings, support the ZEW Club, and arrange trips to areas that interest you such as zoos and wildlife rehabilitation centers. Call the places where you want to go, find out what opportunities are available, and do it early!

The Wrap Up

I hope that this article has enlightened some of you to the opportunities available for veterinary students. My best advice is to not wait around for these positions to come to you, go out and hunt down the positions that interest you. Everyone should try to use all of the resources available at ISU CVM such as professors, advisors, veterinary journals, and the Veterinary Information Network (VIN) on the worldwide web, and above all, talk to fourth year veterinary students. They will have the most current and realistic information on

preceptorships.

Thanks to Dave Cox and Jeb Mortimer for taking the time out of their very busy schedules to participate in this article. My apologies for anything that is misquoted, but I tried my best to keep it in the spirit of the original interviews. ♦



Dave is sizing himself up for a new set of autoclavable surgical scrubs.

Dave Cox, VM4, ISU

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