



My career aspiration is to become a veterinarian. As a result, I was assigned to the Riverside Animal Hospital to complete my summer internship experience. Under the direction of Elaina Collins and Dr. John Rossi, I interacted with quite a few animal species that would not be seen in a typical veterinary office. This exposure really helped me to solidify my decision of wanting to become an exotic veterinarian.

My duties during my internship were mainly to shadow and assist Dr. Rossi or any of the technicians when they needed an extra pair of hands. In my very first experience, I learned two skills that would be crucial in any veterinary setting: animal handling and animal restraint. These techniques ensure the safety of the veterinarian, the technician, and the animal. Restraint techniques were utilized in activities such as injections, and blood draws. Restraint could also be used for general examinations.

It was fascinating to watch Dr. Rossi with the animals. During one examination, he picked up a leopard gecko. Just by touching the gecko's face, he could determine the strength and density of the animal's bones, and he could tell if the gecko was in the early stages of metabolic bone disease. After the exam, he recommended calcium to strengthen the bones.

Running tests and prescribing medicine are major parts of the profession. I got practice running one of the office's new machines to test T4, or thyroid levels, to determine whether they were stable. It turned out the dog who was our test subject had low T4 levels, and we were able to help her. The vet techs walked me through the steps of collecting fecal samples, and I learned about parasites that I had never heard of before, such as giardia and coccidia, both of which effect the gastrointestinal tract.

Perhaps the most upsetting part of the experience was watching the euthanasia process, but in order to pursue this career it is necessary to learn about the practice and accept the need for it. This experience really helped me to understand what happens in an exotic veterinarian's office on a daily basis.

After working with raccoons, turtles, bearded dragons, cats, rats, rabbits, guinea pigs and many other animals, I can safely say that I love this profession. Without the AnnieRuth Foundation's summer internship experience, I believe it would have taken me longer to reach this conclusion. This experience has been instrumental in informing me of some of the basics required to succeed, and I am extremely grateful that I was awarded this opportunity. I believe I will be able to use what I have learned to ensure success in the future.