

As with many pre-veterinary students, I knew I wanted to be a veterinarian from a very young age. My dream was facilitated by the farming operation my parents owned, and the encouragement they have given me throughout my childhood. As I proceeded through my primary and secondary schooling, I worked hard at my studies and maintained excellent grades to prepare for university and eventually applying to veterinary schools.

However, the real story is at home on my farm, where my parents had my sister and me be involved in every aspect of animal husbandry, from cleaning the pens and barns, feeding, vaccinating, milking cows, administering medicine, assisting in calving, raising calves....the list is extensive. On the farm we also had horses, dogs, cats and chickens. Although the dairy cattle formed the basis of our farming business, all of the animals we owned allowed me to become well-versed in the health care of a variety of species. From time to time, we would rescue a wild animal, such as an orphaned possum or raccoon, and nurse it back to health.

The local 4-H clubs I joined, as well as being a member of my local chapter of Future Farmers of America, supplemented my home-farm education and also gave me an opportunity to teach fellow students and younger children about animal health and care. When I was sixteen I became my county's dairy princess, which gave me state-wide opportunities to share my knowledge of dairy farming and agriculture. Throughout my life, I have had a chance to discuss cattle and horses with a multitude of farmers, veterinarians, and teachers. I have been infinitely enriched by all of those role models and acquaintances who have contributed to my education and my goal of becoming a veterinarian.

My father, who passed away in 2019, and my mother, continually educated my sister and me, incorporating travel, leadership opportunities and old-fashioned hard work. Our dynamic (and sometimes exhausting) lives gave me a springboard for learning, leadership and adventure.

My father was an alumnus of ODU, so I chose to head to Norfolk for my pre-veterinary studies.

The first professor I met at ODU was engaging and always willing to have interesting discussions about changes in agriculture, science and medicine. Throughout my tenure here, I have continued to meet professors, advisors, and even the school president, who all have inspired and encouraged me. Throughout my time at ODU, I was the head of re-starting the Pre-Vet Medical Association. This is an association that welcomes any student that is interested in animals, veterinary medicine or being a veterinary technician. It was thrilling to see the club grow with each meeting, due to the hard work of other members and me. Those other members became the officers who took over the leadership of the club this past spring. I was incredibly proud to be able to leave the club in such capable hands after two years of rebuilding it. Being at ODU also reminded me of my love for learning Spanish. As I was required to take two semesters of Spanish at ODU to complete my language requirement, I decided to make Spanish my minor. This led to studying abroad in Spain for four months, meeting wonderful people, learning about a different culture, traveling and interning at a marine research station in Calpe, Spain for two weeks. The marine research station was doing incredible work with the *Pinna nobilis*, an endangered giant mollusk that is an essential filter feeder in the Mediterranean Sea.

Currently, I am continuing my pre-veterinary studies by obtaining hours through an internship at our local large animal clinic. Interning for this clinic allows me to see and do things I would not otherwise have the opportunity to do so. Large animal clinics are special in that for the majority of the time you are working on farms where the importance of veterinarians is understood and

appreciated. Many farmers are more than willing for interns such as myself to learn from and work on their animals. My tasks range from assisting with surgeries to drawing blood and administering injections. The large animal veterinarians are very good at pushing me outside of my comfort zone, something I know will be a crucial skill in a veterinary program.

My experiences throughout my life have pushed me not only towards veterinary medicine, but also towards a dedication to helping animals from all walks of life. I have been taught to fight for every breath an animal takes, but to know when their time has come and to help them leave this earth as comfortably as possible. My goal in attending a veterinary program has allowed me to meet people and experience things that inspire me everyday. I believe that I am capable of succeeding in a rigorous program like a veterinary program due to my experiences having prepared me to have the dedication, work-ethic and mental stability that it requires.