

Shelter Medicine Externship Offer

Shelter medicine is unique in that it encompasses both traditional small animal clinical practice and herd or population medicine. Additional challenges are presented as the practitioner must often work without any medical history for the patient. The Winnipeg Humane Society had developed a 2 to 4 week rotation in shelter medicine for veterinary students in their final year of veterinary school. The program will cover important aspects of shelter practice, including control of disease in the shelter, shelter behaviour issues, animal population control strategies, spay and neuter surgery, pediatric care, and medical and surgical care of individual animals. The longer rotation will permit the student to gain more than an introduction to shelter issues and provide many more opportunities to gain skills.

Medicine: Externship students will be expected to assist the shelter veterinarians in the examination and treatment of animals in the care of The Winnipeg Humane Society. All animals are treated as soon as problems are noted and we endeavour to euthanize only on the basis of untreatable medical or behavioural problems. The majority of medical conditions reflect the problems associated with the stress and confinement in the shelter environment, specifically infectious respiratory disease or gastrointestinal illness. However, animals in our care range in age from pre-natal to geriatric and all have unique health concerns which must be addressed. Infectious disease and parasitology are issues especially important to the shelter veterinarian and students can expect considerable experience in these areas. Diagnostics and vaccination strategies appropriate for shelter animals will be explored.

Surgery: The Winnipeg Humane Society operates a high volume spay and neuter program with approximately 4500 surgeries per year. Students preferably have already had a surgical rotation or considerable previous surgical experience in order to maximize their surgical opportunities in our high volume spay and neuter program. However, even the confident novice will gain experience in spay and neuter surgery on cats, dogs and rabbits. Additional surgical opportunities vary with the current cases but include orthopaedics, soft-tissue, gastro-intestinal and urological, dental, and other miscellaneous procedures. In addition to surgical experience, the students will become proficient in induction to anaesthesia and other para-surgical procedures.

Behaviour: The Winnipeg Humane Society evaluates most dogs' behaviour to assess adoptability and potential problems. The student will be instructed on the mechanism of this assessment and also be expected to discuss the limitations and advantages of these tests. The students will be instructed how to safely handle animals with unknown temperaments in the shelter environment and how to better communicate and reassure stressed and fearful animals.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the basis of their abilities to develop necessary skills and their understanding of shelter medicine. Devotion to the profession and compassion and respect for the animals is expected of all students.

Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff (Edited by Lila Miller and Stephen Zawistowski, Blackwell Publishing, 2004) is the reference text book for this rotation. Additional papers for discussion and handouts will be provided to the students. Students on 3 or 4 week rotations will be required to submit a research paper dealing with a particular interesting aspect of Shelter Medicine.

Applications can be sent to Dr. Erika Anseeuw
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