First-year student diary

Now that her veterinary course is under way at Liverpool, Rosie Perrett has already begun learning fundamental clinical skills such as scrubbing up and bandaging.

We’re now fully into the veterinary course and it’s becoming clear why the process of getting into veterinary school is tough – it’s not just about academia, it’s the work ethic, the motivation required and the vast amount of information covered in every 50-minute lecture.

It’s clear that, for some, the transition from school to university has come as a bit of a shock, and they feel they have to work every single minute of the day, rarely giving themselves a breather to immerse themselves in the social activities. Having been through university before, I’m not as fussed by possibly missing out on social opportunities if doing so means I can grab some extra hours of sleep or get some work done, but I think it’s taking time for others to adapt to the veterinary university lifestyle.

The timetable is jam-packed with lectures and lab time, which can often mean a nine to five day. Friends on other courses can’t believe that we can work so much, but having a regular routine makes organising time a lot easier as well as regulating a decent body clock.

During these first few weeks, we have been introduced to the topics that we will cover in the first semester, as well as the ‘other’ stuff: the practical sessions and the ‘professional skills’ course. Some topics are new to me, while others rekindle memories from A level. But what I didn’t think would happen was that skills I learned at the age of five would reappear in a veterinary course! I always thought I could tie my shoelaces and wash my hands, and, of course, I can. However, I now know that the best type of knot is a non-slip knot, and that scrubbing up is a lot more than just putting soap on your hands.

The clinical skills that we’re learning seem complex and fiddly right now, so we’re given the opportunity to practise them each week and help each other out. But we can’t resist attempting to bandage ourselves. We’re learning, or in the process of learning, invaluable skills that are second nature to most qualified vets.

We’ve also had the opportunity to visit the Leahurst campus on the Wirral as part of our handling animals and clinical skills module. On a Monday morning, full of freshers’ flu, my first animal handling experience was at the dairy farm. I don’t come from a farming background and, apart from work experience placements, it was all quite new to me. We started with the calves where I made myself look like a fool by sexing a calf wrongly; I’m still unsure how I managed that! However, my embarrassment was quickly forgotten because two calves began licking my hands. I know veterinary science will require a bit more than befriending calves, but I can think of worse ways of spending a Monday morning, especially feeling so rubbish. It made it the best day yet.

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