

How to Help Students Locate Veterinary Externship Sites

Finding a veterinary externship site can be challenging for students. Your assistance in helping arrange placement can be the difference that pushes them from having untapped potential to working confidently in the veterinary field. Here are eleven tips you can use to guide students toward establishing hands-on training to one day become a valued part of a veterinary team.



Recommend students begin their search early.

Students should begin their search for externship sites as early as the first semester. However, students should be clear in their inquiries that they are looking for an externship site for the end of the second semester.



Suggest looking into agricultural organizations for large animal externships.

Local 4-H organizations and farm sanctuaries are good places for students to start looking for large animal externship sites. FFA and the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture Extension Program are great places to start as they may be able to put you or a student in touch with veterinarians looking for externs.



Prepare students for travel.

It may be difficult for students to find an externship site that attends to certain species in some geographical locations so students should be prepared to travel to areas where they are more common.



Encourage students to develop resumes.

Resumes allow students to show potential externship sites their reliability and previous experiences.



Suggest students approach a site about an externship opportunity in-person.

Email requests often go unanswered so students should try to approach externship opportunities in-person or over the phone.



Suggest that students speak to practice manager or the lead vet technician.

Notes left at the reception desk may get lost so students should try to speak directly with the practice manager or the lead veterinary technician about an externship opportunity.



Encourage students to follow up with their requests.

If a student hasn't received a response from a potential externship site within a week, they should follow up with a polite email or phone call.



Advise students to look into volunteering, shadowing, or riding along at a potential externship site.

Volunteering often enables students to build a rapport with the site and increases their likelihood of being accepted as externs.



Reach out to your network.

As a veterinary professional you may have contacts who could assist your students in finding externship sites.



Help your students manage their schedules.

If a student finds a potential site that conflicts with their work schedule, talk to your office manager or look into alternative arrangements such as unpaid time off.



Supervise your students if comfortable and able.

You may assist students with uncommon skills or species if you have access to the minimum amount of required species and equipment and are comfortable supervising. To supervise, you must fill out the required paperwork accordingly.