



Teacher Newsletter of The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

## Animal Careers

**“I love animals, I think I’ll be a veterinarian when I grow up!”**

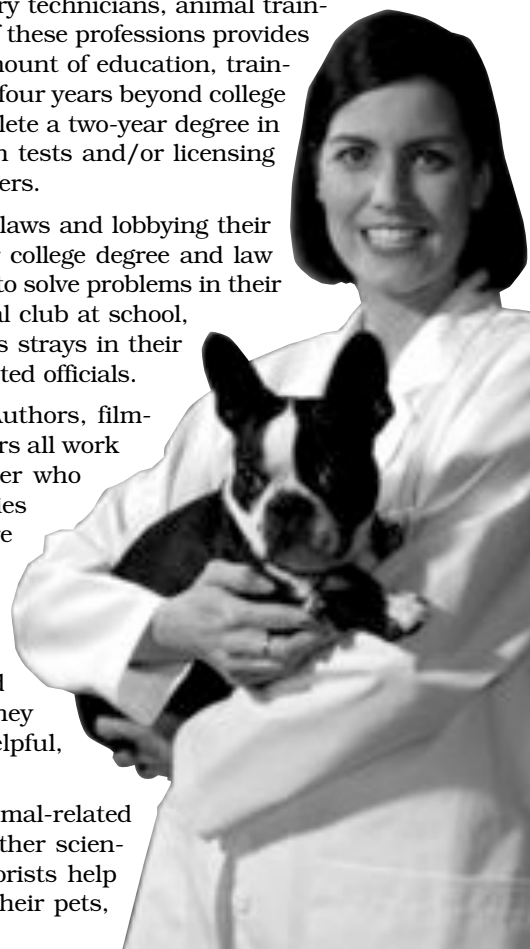
**T**his is what you will often hear from a child who loves animals when asked about his or her future career plans. **Becoming a veterinarian is a wonderful aspiration, and should be encouraged of course, but there are many other careers where working with and benefiting animals. Careers with animals can range from working directly with animals, such as veterinarians and veterinary technicians, to less hands-on endeavors, including lawyers, educators and authors.**

Traditional animal-related careers include veterinarians, veterinary technicians, animal trainers, groomers, shelter workers, and wildlife rehabilitators. Each of these professions provides plenty of hands-on work with animals. They require a certain amount of education, training, or certification. Veterinarians must attend veterinary school—four years beyond college plus a two or three-year internship. Veterinary technicians complete a two-year degree in science and must be state-licensed. Apprenticeships, certification tests and/or licensing may be necessary for groomers, shelter workers and animal trainers.

Lawyers and lobbyists help animals by writing animal protection laws and lobbying their legislators to get them passed. Requirements include a four-year college degree and law school. Kids can get a taste of what lobbying is all about and work to solve problems in their own communities. They can help animals by organizing an animal club at school, choosing an animal issue that concerns their community such as strays in their neighborhoods, and starting a letter writing campaign to local elected officials.

There are almost always ways to work animals into a career. Authors, filmmakers, photographers, office support staff and humane educators all work with and for animals, too. This includes documentary filmmaker who shoots films for Animal Planet, authors who write and edit stories about animals for magazines and photographers who capture animals in action. Office support staff range from the office assistants to fundraisers, who all provide the administrative support and resources needed to run an animal shelter or humane organization efficiently. The experience and educational requirements vary for office staff. Humane educators teach children and adults about animals and why it’s important to care for them. They must be able to speak in public and a degree in education is helpful, but not always necessary.

Students interested in the sciences have many choices of animal-related careers. Animal behaviorists, marine biologists, zoologists and other scientists can either work directly or indirectly with animals. Behaviorists help people understand their sometimes complex relationships with their pets,



while marine biologists and zoologists work in zoos or research facilities to maintain the health and well-being of animals. These careers require degrees in the sciences and may require graduate and post-graduate work.

For students interested in law enforcement or animal rescue work, career as a humane officer or animal control officer may be the right choice. Humane law officers enforce humane laws to protect animals in towns and cities. In certain states, officers are allowed to carry weapons and have the power to make arrests if an individual has violated any laws that protect animals. They enforce licensing laws, rescue trapped animals and investigate cruelty cases. There is specific on-the-job training and some states require certification.

In some professions, animals help us as much as we help them, for example, mounted police officers who are partnered with a horse or canine partners. Dogs assist police officers and emergency workers in many important ways, such as drug sniffing and bomb sniffing, and search-and-rescue dogs are trained to locate lost people.

Animal-assisted educators bring animals into classrooms so children can experience them up close and learn about their care. Some animal trainers teach dogs to assist people with disabilities or detect seizures for people with epilepsy. These wonderful assistance dogs make life easier for their human partners.

Working closely with animals can be very emotional. Veterinarians and other professionals who work directly with animals deal with such sensitive issues as animal abuse, euthanasia, disease and owner apathy. All of these situations can be upsetting. When considering a career with animals, students should ask themselves some basic questions: Can I deal with illness or an animal in pain? Am I willing to study and take lots of science and math courses in school? Am I willing to volunteer my time to learn more about working with animals?

Volunteering is a great way to get a taste of the satisfaction that comes from working with animals.

Shelters in particular appreciate another set of helping hands. Volunteers in animal shelters often help feed the animals, socialize and play with them and provide walks in the park. Kids who are fourteen and up are usually welcome to help. Volunteers in shelters can also help potential adopters choose the best pets for their lifestyles, or even help with special events and fundraisers for their shelter. Interested kids should contact their local shelter's volunteer coordinator or humane educator for more information.

Perhaps the most important thing for students to remember when considering a future career is passion. If passionate and focused about what they do, chances are they will be successful and happy. There are always ways to incorporate animals and humane actions into their career. From the architect who remembers family pets when designing a new apartment building to the school teacher who fosters a kind and humane classroom, there are always opportunities to consider the needs of animals. Animals can't speak for themselves, so it is up to people to look out for and take care of them.

Helping animals is a choice young people can make no matter what their personal career goals, whether they are in the sciences, accounting, marketing or publishing.

Included below is a list of resources to help students learn more about working with animals. A career that impacts or involves animals is extremely rewarding, and a wonderful future goal for any child who loves animals. Maybe the next time you ask an animal-loving student what she wants to be when she grows up, you may just hear "I love animals, so I think I'll be a lawyer when I grow up!"

*Teachers in classrooms are in the unique position to guide and help their students learn about caring for animals. If you have a classroom pet students can and should have assigned responsibilities in caring for the animal. From feeding and socializing to teaching kids in other classes or lower grades about class pets and their needs, your students will see what it is like to work with animals.*

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Career Ideas for Kids Who Like Animals and Nature*** by Diane Lindsey Reeves and Nancy Heubeck  
***Careers with Animals: The Humane Society of the United States*** by Willow Ann Sirch  
***Cool Careers for Girls with Animals*** by Ceel Pasternak and Linda Thornburg  
***Working With Wildlife: A Guide to Careers in the Animal World*** by Thane Maynard,  
Forward by Jane Goodall