

Animal Care and Husbandry Careers

Document available online at <https://ib.oregonstate.edu/undergraduate/advising/college-advising-guide>.

This guide is not an official option, concentration or minor. Students should review the information below and work with their advisor to consider how best to integrate relevant courses and experiences to prepare for careers in animal care and husbandry.

Positions in Animal Care and Husbandry

Animal care and husbandry positions are varied, and can range from lab animal technicians in private industry to wildlife rehabilitators for non-profits. All of them require significant animal care experience, not coursework, often with a wide variety of animals. Examples of positions include:

- Animal Caretaker
- Wildlife Rehabilitation
- Aquarist
- Zookeeper
- Veterinary Assistant
- Shelter Coordinator
- Apiarist
- Research Assistant
- Lab Animal Technician
- And more...

Animal Care/Husbandry Career Information Links:

- [The Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#)
- [USA Jobs \(Government Positions\)](#)
- [National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association](#)
- [International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council](#)
- [American Association of Laboratory Animal Science](#)

Coursework:

There are no required degrees or courses for most animal care careers, but some areas of coursework can be beneficial, and you can discuss this more with your advisor.

Animal Behavior:

Understanding animal behavior is key to animal care careers, and interested students should strongly consider taking Z 350 Animal Behavior. Additional behavior courses are not required, but some psychology courses that can be value added include: PSY 201 and 202 General Psychology, PSY 340 Cognitive Psychology, PSY 381 Abnormal Psychology and/or PSY 485 Behavior Modification.

Additional Organismal Biology and Animal Diversity:

Coursework that increases knowledge about the biology of diverse taxa can be helpful. Talk to your advisor about areas of your major that relate to this first. Though not required, examples of courses that could be considered (but are not offered on all campuses or every year) include: FW 311, FW 315, FW 317, FW 427, Z 361/362, Z 364, Z 371/372 and/or Z 473.

Informal Education:

Communicating with the public is frequently a very important part of positions, particularly at zoos, aquariums and other public institutions. In addition to the required COMM 111Z Public Speaking course, some examples of helpful coursework in this area include: FES 430 Forest as a Classroom, GEOG 453 Effective Communication of Environmental Change Science, TRAL 493 Environmental Interpretation.

Other skills:

Though not required, some other coursework can provide useful skills for animal care. Examples include ANS 311 Principles of Animal Nutrition, ANS 316 Reproduction of Domestic Animals (& ANS 317 lab?), ANS 441 Topics in Animal Learning and FW 328 Wildlife Capture and Immobilization.

Animal Care Experience

Gaining hands-on experience is particularly important to landing positions and advancing in animal care careers. Students should focus on the quality of experience rather than the species of animal, as any relevant experience will facilitate an understanding of animal care/husbandry, and frequently organizations look for diverse experience. Students are encouraged to start with shelter experiences before trying for more competitive positions with exotics.

Students should carefully consider the reputation and accreditation of any facilities they plan to work with to insure they are engaged in best practices. Many institutions attempt to band themselves as 'sanctuaries' while not truly focusing on animal welfare or conservation goals. Anytime you are looking into internships, it is important to check and see if the opportunity is offered by an accredited third party organization such as the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#), [Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries](#), [American Sanctuary Association](#), or others. Rehabilitation facilities should be licensed by the state they reside in. Ask questions if you have concerns. Accepting opportunities at exploitive institutions that do not engage in best practices can be detrimental to your chances of joining accredited institutions.

Oregon regional options are listed below, but students should search for similar opportunities in other areas as appropriate:

- [Heartland Humane Society](#)
- [Safehaven Humane Society](#)
- [Audubon Society of Corvallis](#)
- [Chintimini Wildlife Center](#)
- Hatfield Marine Science Center Aquarist Volunteers: contact <https://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/users/sidney-stetson>
- [Oregon Zoo](#)
- [Oregon Coast Aquarium](#)
- [Wildlife Safari](#)
- [Oregon Wildlife Rehabilitation Association](#)
- [Expanded list of Oregon/West Coast Opportunities](#)

Research Opportunities

Research, while not required, can be beneficial for laboratory animal care positions or for students interested in working with organizations with research as part of their mission. Research provides the opportunity to develop analytical and communication skills while expanding understanding of the scientific process and research methods. Some research labs also have specific opportunities to care for research animals. See the [Integrative Biology research page](#) for information about IB and OSU resources, and students should also look at other research organizations outside of OSU for opportunities.

International Opportunities

OSU GO has diverse international internship experiences that enable students to acquire experience handling and caring for captive/wild animals. Opportunities are highlighted on the Veterinary & Animal Care section of [the Biology and Zoology Study Abroad website](#).