

**An interview with Dr. Carling Matejka( Mixed Animal Veterinarian, based in Alberta, Canada)**

Covered by: Ryan Wallace (V-2018-03-038)

I am a Student enrolled in B.V.Sc & A.H. under the Foreign National category. I live in Ontario, Canada and due to recent closures to college I am at home and I have gotten in touch with a veterinarian from Airdrie, Alberta. Since I will ultimately be working in Canada, I decided to ask her a few questions about the profession and what it's like working as a vet there, hoping that this will expand the horizon of our thoughts about being a veterinarian.

Ryan - Hi Dr.Carling! Hope you're doing well. First of all I'd like to thank you for taking out some of your precious time and doing this! Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Dr.Carling - Hi! I am a mixed animal veterinarian that grew up in a small town in Alberta, Canada. I was raised on a multi-generation purebred Angus cattle operation. We also raised chickens, purebred Suffolk sheep, and had a few horses. Growing up, my two siblings and I were always very involved on the farm, helping our parents and grandparents care for our animals. Outside of veterinary medicine, I am very active and I love downhill skiing, CrossFit/weightlifting, golfing, and figure skating. I am incredibly social and spend a lot of my time off with my family and friends.



Ryan - What is your educational background?

Dr.Carling - After I graduated high school, I moved to Edmonton, Alberta and attended Grant MacEwan University and the University of Alberta. Here, I did part of my bachelor of science degree in agriculture. In North America, you have to do part or all of a bachelor program before you can apply for vet school. I was lucky that in my 3rd year of my bachelor's program, I was accepted into the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. I moved to Calgary, Alberta to complete my veterinary schooling.

R - What got you interested in veterinary medicine in the first place?

Dr.C - Growing up on a farm I always loved animals. But, the biggest reason I wanted to become a Veterinarian was that I wanted to have a voice for the voiceless and advocate for the amazing livestock farmers.

R - That is so sweet! So what's your favorite memory of vet school?

Dr.C - I had a really amazing group of friends. Most of my favorite memories are about our time spent together laughing and preparing for our clinical skills exams.

R - What's your favorite subject/field under veterinary science?

Dr.C - I love surgery and everything to do with cattle medicine!

R - How do you deal with the fact that there are so many species that we might have to treat and how do you stay prepared for that?

Dr.C - Most things transfer across species but there's just slight differences between each one. So if you can remember your general physiology and anatomy and then remember the small differences between each species you shouldn't have any issues! I also try to remember certain drugs that I can and can't use and it's species and the most common diseases in each. You also usually have a textbook nearby, can call a friend to ask questions, or can always use your resources online to help remind you!

R - You're absolutely right! Here's a fun question now- what are 3 veterinary related things you always carry with you?

Dr.C - I usually always have a stethoscope, a textbook on my phone, and a thermometer.



R - Another fun question! What's something that people think is weird/gross but very normal for you as a veterinarian?

Dr.C - Haha! There are so many things! But the most common are when a dog defecates in the exam room, expressing anal glands or doing a rectal exam on a cow!

R - So Dr. Carling, what does a normal routine day look like for you in your clinics?

Dr.C - This really depends on the day. I usually get to the clinic around 8 AM and check my email and any messages that I might have. Then I check on my surgical patients and let the techs know what sedation protocols I want as my premed. I then reply to emails and try to do some callbacks before surgery. Then, I usually do a few spays and some neuters pretty routinely. Sometimes there is the odd toe amputation, leg amputation, enucleation, or mass

removal. Once I wrap up my surgeries, I usually have a drop off appointment that I look at. Then in the afternoon I have a combination of vaccination or medical appointments. I round off my day finishing up my medical records and then I usually review my schedule for the next day.

R - That sounds incredibly busy and yet so exciting! On that note, what's the most exciting case you've ever worked on?

Dr.C - The most exciting/stressful case that I ever worked up was one night when I was working an emergency shift. I had a Great Dane come in that was regurgitating and retching. He was also really bloated. We did radiographs and diagnosed him with a gastric dilation volvulus or a twisted stomach. He also had a pretty severe arrhythmia from the twisted stomach. This was stressful for me because I had never seen one before as a veterinarian. I needed to manage the arrhythmia prior to going to surgery and then do a surgery that I've never done or seen before. There is nowhere else for the dog to go because I was in a small town far away from any vet surgeons. I told the owner that this was my first time doing the surgery and the owner still agreed to go ahead with it. I spent a significant amount of time stabilizing the dog just reading the textbook over and over again to try to solidify the surgery in my head. The surgery went really well and the dog survived!



R - That's great! It just shows how skilled you are and how one must never feel ashamed about going through books/literature before any unfamiliar protocol. Well Doctor, what do you think is the best thing about being a veterinarian?

Dr.C - Obviously being able to help pets haha. But, the best thing about being a veterinarian is the appreciation you get from an owner when you help their pet! They are so thankful.

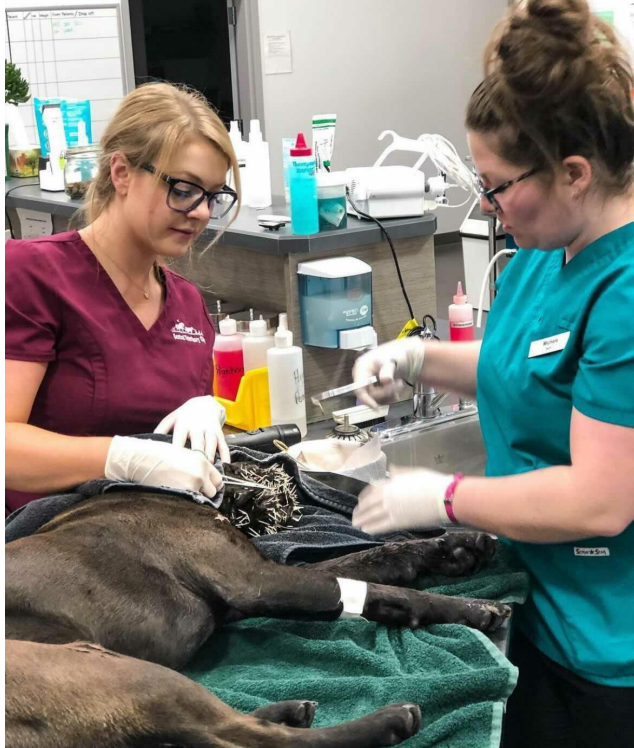
R -Dr. Carling, even though it's 2022, our own class has a male to female ratio of 50:50 and we have so many great women in veterinary medicine all over the world, I still feel that a gender bias exists in this field, even if it's just in the minds of people. What's something you've had to face just because you're a female veterinarian and how did you overcome that?

Dr.C - It sucks that in today's society we still see sexism in the professional world. It is still unfortunately evident in both small and large animal medicine. Working on large animals I felt like I was discriminated against a lot because of my gender. You could tell that farmers respected me last because I was a woman in the way that they responded to my recommendations versus my male coworkers. However, we can't let this get us down. The biggest thing that has helped me is that I remind myself that they came to me because they needed my help regardless of my gender. And, I already know that I know more than they know. If they are incredibly disrespectful to me I have no issue in saying "if you don't want my help you can go somewhere else". You don't have to put up with the disrespect. You are so knowledgeable. You have worked hard to get to this point and you know a heck of a lot more than they know.

R- You're absolutely right! But what is the general attitude of people towards veterinarians in your country?

Dr.C - In Canada, I'd say that the general attitude of people towards veterinarians is relatively good. Veterinarians are well respected and thought of as quite intelligent. The only negative attribute is that some people can think that because veterinary medicine is very expensive that vets are just in it for the money. Which definitely isn't the case based on our paychecks! LOL (they are not incredibly high).





R - Haha! I guess that is quite a common misconception! Doctor, what do you think about the highs and lows of being a veterinarian?

Dr.C - There are definite highs and lows of being a veterinarian. The highs are being able to put the puzzle pieces together and figure out what's going on with an animal. Then, being able to make them feel better. Another high, which I already addressed, is the appreciation of the owners that know that you made a difference.

I think lows are difficult clients that don't necessarily understand that there isn't always a guarantee and medicine and that medicine isn't clear cut. The ones that you have to fight with every step of the way just to try to get an ounce of respect from them. Also, the cases that just don't go the way that you want them to. And every case isn't gonna work out so unfortunately this is something that you kind of have to get used to.

R -Yes, we must always try our best but we also have to accept that sometimes, it really wont be in our hands. And we shouldn't let that affect us a lot. Well Dr.Carling, this has been so informative and refreshing. But unfortunately its time to say goodbye! Before that, I'd like you to give a message to our students!

Dr.C - Keep your chins up! You've come so far to get to this point and it is an amazing industry with a great network of vets. Don't feel discouraged. Don't be afraid to try multiple practices. Each practice is different and every practice isn't one size fits all. Also, always respect your support staff. Your veterinary technicians, your veterinary technician assistance, and your

reception staff are just as crucial to the practice as you are. Treat them with respect and they will help you so much more!

R: Thank you Doctor! I wish you all the luck for your future practice. Have a great year ahead, and once again, a big thank you for doing this!

Dr.C: Absolutely! I wish you all the luck for your magazine and may you all become great successful veterinarians!

