



Veterinary Specialty of the Day: Zoological Medicine

Some veterinarians and veterinary technicians undergo further training to specialize in a specific field of medicine. Veterinarians who specialize in Zoological Medicine can diagnose and treat wildlife.

Wild animals are not domesticated, meaning that they don't need humans to raise them and can live comfortably in the wild. Domesticated animals, on the other hand, rely on humans for their care and include animals such as dogs, cats, cows, and chickens.

Discussion Questions

- What are some examples of wild animals?
- Why might a wild animal need to see a veterinarian?

Veterinarians in zoological medicine can work in...



Zoos & Aquariums

The animals that live in zoos and aquariums need trained veterinarians to treat any potential injuries or illness.



Wildlife Conservation

Veterinarians in wildlife conservation work with organizations that study and help take care of wild animal populations.



Wildlife Rehabilitation

Veterinarians can work to treat injured or sick animals who will then be released back into the wild.

Treating Wildlife: What Specialists Need to Know

Veterinarians who specialize in zoological medicine are responsible for knowing or figuring out how to treat and care for hundreds of different animal species. Below is background information studied by veterinarians when creating treatment or care plans for a wild animal.



Anatomy & Physiology

A zoological medicine veterinarian should know both the anatomy (body structure) and the physiology (how the body works) for all of the animals they treat.



Life History Traits

An animal's life history traits include characteristics such as the animal's average lifespan, the age at which they reach adulthood, the average number of babies per litter, etc.



Habitat

A habitat is the environment where an animal lives. For example, an animal might live in the desert, the rainforest, the wetlands, the tundra, etc.



Nutrition

Veterinarians should not only know what an animal eats in the wild, but also which vitamins and minerals their body needs to stay healthy.



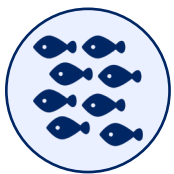
Behavior

Understanding an animal's natural behavior can help veterinarians figure out if an animal is acting abnormally and which types of enrichment (mental or physical activities) would be best for the animal's care.



Wildlife Diseases

It is critical that zoological medicine specialists know which diseases certain animals are more likely to catch and how to best treat the animals who have them.



Population

For veterinarians working in wildlife conservation, it is important to know the size of the animal's population in the wild.



Conservation Status

It can be important for veterinarians to know if a particular animal is an endangered species, meaning that this animal's population in the wild is at risk of going extinct (no longer existing).

Animal Profile

Insert photo or drawing
of animal here

Animal:

Scientific Name:

Type: (mammal, bird, reptile, etc.)



Habitat

Where does this animal live?



Life History Traits

How long does this animal live?



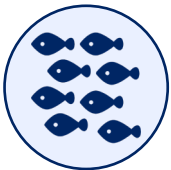
Nutrition

What does this animal eat?



Behavior

What are some common behaviors
this animal does?



Population

How many of these animals live in
the wild?



Conservation Status

Is this animal endangered?



Wildlife Diseases

What diseases can this animal
catch?

Activities



PreK & Up

Dramatic Play: Zoo or Animal Rescue

Materials: stuffed animals, veterinary toy tools, paper, tape, markers

- Set up your own zoo or animal rescue for the stuffed animals in your home!
- There are endless possibilities. You can:
 - Use paper and markers to create signs for different areas
 - Set up a veterinary clinic for the animals in your care
 - Try and recreate animal habitats, such as a rainforest for a monkey or a grassland for a lion



5th Grade & Up

Animal Profile

Materials: paper, clipboard, pencil, websites or books on animals

- It is important for zoological medicine veterinarians to research the animals they are taking care of. Using the worksheet on Page 3, fill out the information on any animal of your choosing to find out as much information as you can about them!

Activities



9th - 12th Grade

Career Exploration: Zoological Medicine

Materials: computer/tablet/phone with internet access

- The field of veterinary medicine is huge and there are many job opportunities available to those interested in pursuing a career in the field.
- If your child is interested in a career in zoological medicine, encourage them to research the various job opportunities and programs that exist.
- Need a place to start? Check out this interview with a zoological medicine specialist: <https://www.vetsetgo.com/i-want-to-be-a-vet/vets-on-the-wild-side-and-interview-with-a-zoological-medicine-specialist>

References:

<https://acvr.org/>

<https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2017-07-15/zoo-veterinarians-behind-scenes-and-field>

<https://www.stlzoo.org/conservation/institute-for-conservation-medicine>

<https://www.vetsetgo.com/i-want-to-be-a-vet/vets-on-the-wild-side-and-interview-with-a-zoological-medicine-specialist>