

Wild-working: A Discussion of Zoo-based Careers

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Answered on video

- How many roles are there to become a vet nurse within a zoo?
- How would you become a vet nurse within a zoo?
- I have a physical disability and I want to work in a zoo or with zoo animals, do you know of anybody with a physical disability in this industry? Is there any jobs I can do work with zoo animals?
- As far as getting a job in a zoo, how important is it to have experience with exotic species. I don't live near a zoo so don't have opportunity to volunteer/gain experience
- Is the training to become a nurse at a zoo similar to training with small animals?
- I am currently doing level 3 animal welfare what other qualifications would i need to become a zoo keeper and zoo animal trainer
- What A levels would be a good choice to become an animal trainer?
- Apart from a zoology qualification, what are key things they look out for when sorting through applicants? I am focusing on wildlife conservation and rescue, however I am still very much interested in working in a zoo
- Generally, during covid times, are there volunteering opportunities within zoos to enable young people to gain experience?

Additional Q&As

What is the best route to take if you want to become a zoo keeper in the zoo industry?

Gain animal or zoo-related qualifications and practical experience. Work hard and be persistent – it is a highly competitive arena.

How old do I need to be for work experience at a zoo?

It depends on the zoo but usually 18 years old.

I have completed level 1 and 2 animal welfare at Moulton College and I am doing level 3 animal management. Is there anything else you would recommend that would be good to become a zoo keeper?

You are doing the right thing getting your qualifications but also you should try to gain some experience of working hands-on with animals.

Can you become a veterinary nurse in a zoo whilst also caring for the animals as a zoo keeper would?

If you mean can you work as a vet nurse and a keeper at the same time I think this could be possible but would be zoo-dependant. If you mean can you train and study to become a vet nurse while you are a zoo keeper it depends if you work full-time or not and can fit it all in.

Do zoo animal trainers only train the animals to take medicine?

Most zoo animal training is related to husbandry and health management but some is also to display natural behaviours for education purposes.

I have an FdSc in zoo management and looking at doing the apprenticeship route to become a RVN...would these be enough to move onto to become a vet nurse in a zoo? If so, how would you go about this?

Yes, gain as much practical experience as you can and then keep an eye out for jobs, which are rare and highly competitive.

My dream is to be an endangered specialist and try stop animals to go extinct. Could you give me some advice on achieving my dream please?

Gain qualifications in animal or conservation-related subjects and gain practical experience. Work hard and be persistent – it is a highly competitive arena.

What qualifications are needed for the different roles in the zoo? What roles need the highest level of education if there are any?

It depends on the zoo – each zoo has different criteria. Generally, keepers and registrars have a level 3 or a degree but I also know a lot of keepers with MScs. Zoo managers and directors usually, but not always, have at least an honours degree and some have MSc and PhDs but it varies a lot from zoo to zoo and job to job. Conservation specialists often have MScs and PhDs and of course vets have their veterinary qualifications and many also have zoo-specialist qualifications. Educators usually have a degree in either education/teaching or a biology-related subject and many also have teaching experience. **If you apply to be a reserve, are you guaranteed you will then go on to train as a reserve dog handler?**

Applying to become a Reservist does not guarantee that you will become a dog handler. Due to the nature of the work, the bar is set high on entry requirements. It's not impossible but expect stiff competition on gaining a place. Good luck.

