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Cheetah Conservation Fund
P.O. Box 1755
Otjiwarongo, Namibia

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Dear Internship Coordinator,

I am writing to express my interest for an internship position at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia. As a CCF intern, I am interested in conducting independent thesis research on cheetah genetics as well as assisting with ongoing scientific studies. I would also like to contribute to CCF by performing administrative tasks, assisting the veterinary team, and providing care for resident animals such as cheetahs, goats, and guard dogs and puppies.

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern at Mpala Research Centre and fell in love with the wildlife in Laikipia County, Kenya. Within just a few weeks, I began planning my return in hopes of studying big cats for my senior thesis. My love for felines has followed me throughout my education, whether I was writing nonfiction pieces about cats in elementary school, volunteering at animal shelters in high school, or fostering orphaned kittens in college. My professional goals are to become a wildlife veterinarian and researcher, focusing on biodiversity conservation efforts. It would be incredible to combine my passions and study big cat conservation at CCF.

I've narrowed my interests to cheetahs not only because they are an active area of conservation research, but also because they play vital ecological roles such as regulating prey populations and inadvertently feeding other predators. Their numbers are steadily declining and it is crucial that researchers study cheetahs to identify steps towards mitigating threats and sustaining their wild populations. While studying cheetahs may not be feasible in Laikipia at the moment, field sites like CCF also offer opportunities to students. My interest in CCF solidified when I learned that my thesis advisor, Dr. Bridgett vonHoldt, knows Dr. Anne Schmidt-Kunzel of CCF and is currently in touch with her to develop a short-term project related to cheetah genetics.

Although my experience in studying cheetah genetics is limited, I am eager to learn and welcome the challenge. In previous internships, one of my strengths has been thriving in new settings despite limited prior experience. As a research assistant at Princeton Neuroscience Institute and the Rockefeller University, I studied the impacts of stress on the mouse brain, learned molecular techniques like western blots and qRT-PCR, and collected behavioral data. Moreover, at Mpala, I acquired valuable field research skills when studying cattle grazing as I collected and analyzed field data and assisted with GPS tracking of focal cows, camera traps, and vegetation surveys. I also built close relationships with my co-workers, local families, and the Mpala staff despite cultural barriers and I hope to foster a strong sense of community at CCF as well. These experiences demonstrate that I can navigate and thrive in new settings and am driven to acquire necessary skills to contribute. My diverse experiences would help me succeed as a CCF intern because studying cheetahs would involve both lab and field work.

Additionally, my animal care experiences and skills would be applicable as an intern. During my internship at Cape Wildlife Center, I worked with a veterinary team to help treat, rehabilitate, and release local wildlife. Although it was my first pre-vet experience, I enthusiastically rose to the challenge and gained skills in medical procedures and rehabilitation. With nearly a hundred patients in care at a single time, teamwork played a huge role in ensuring all the animals were cared for and treated according to schedule. I improved my leadership and teamwork skills as I worked with and taught volunteers and new interns skills I had learned. Further, as a veterinary assistant at Williamsburg Veterinary Clinic, I assisted the veterinary team with appointments and the treatment of dogs and cats and improved my communication skills by interacting with clients. I have also fostered neonatal kittens and cared for shelter animals as a volunteer for animal shelters. Through these experiences, I have learned that animals and people alike can get far with dedication and I hope to bring the same level of dedication and passion when caring for the animals at CCF.

My research, veterinary, and animal care experiences serve as a great foundation and I look forward to acquiring new skills and broadening my experiences at the Centre. As a CCF intern, I hope to not only learn and develop personally and professionally, but also to deepen my appreciation of wildlife and participate in meaningful work that directly improves the well-being of animals, humans, and the environment. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Best,
Rimsha