

## Motivational letter

Dear reader,

I am writing you this motivational letter because I am looking for a place to do an externship/shadowing opportunity with wildlife veterinarians. I would like to follow along and assist where possible during a period of 3-4 weeks (longer if required).

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Jaklien, I live in Belgium and I study veterinary medicine at Ghent University. In my free time I cook, hike and learn to speak Spanish. I'm also active in IVSA, the "International Veterinary Students Association". This is a worldwide organization with 194 member organizations in 73 different countries which organises exchanges, congresses, lectures, workshops etc and has working groups on different topics like animal welfare, education, wellness and one health. By going to congresses I got the chance to make friends globally. It also sparked my enthusiasm to explore veterinary medicine in different regions of the world.

Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be a wild animal vet. I was inspired by wildlife veterinarians I saw on tv, who had followed their heart and intuition, whose hard work had paid off. I dreamed of taking care of elephants, zebras and giraffes, of having my own chance to make the world a better place for animals with whom we share it.

Now I'm in my fifth year of veterinary medicine and before I actually graduate as a vet (after my sixth year), I've decided to explore more possibilities and find chances to work with the wildlife that has always intrigued me.

My first step was deciding on my thesis subject this summer. I will be working with the chimpanzees in the Dutch safari zoo, De Beekse Bergen, to research the influence of vitamin D supplements on their vitamin D status. This is a big opportunity for me, since most thesis subjects at our university revolve around dogs and horses. I will be helping the local vet with taking blood samples through finger pricks, processing the samples and analysing the data. By engaging me on this thesis subject I will also have a shadowing opportunity with the zoo's vet. This will bring me a first experience with zoo animals.

Secondly I decided to extend my sixth year of study. During this extra time I mainly want to do three things: travel to places I've always wanted to go, gain more practical veterinary experience than I would in school, and three: discover what it's like to be a veterinarian in other parts of the world, to find out if this is something I want to work towards. It is about this last goal I want to connect with you.

A few weeks ago I attended a lecture by a Dutch wildlife veterinarian named Martine van Zijll Langhout who has done different projects with wildlife all around the world and who worked in South-Africa as a wildlife veterinarian for 5 years.

She really inspired me, not only with her amazing stories but also with her honesty. She told us being a wildlife vet is everything but an easy job. About how sometimes there's little sleep, breaks and time for eating. But that it's amazing if you choose to give it what it takes. She also said not to be discouraged if something doesn't work out, that something better might be around the corner once you're ready for it and have learned what you need to learn. She encouraged to keep trying and not give up.

This inspired me to chase my dreams and write this letter. I want to discover for myself what it's actually like to be a wildlife vet, what it entails, the up- and downsides and to know if this is indeed the career I've always wanted. And to hopefully get some hands on experience with wild animals to discover the way they are handled, caught, managed, protected, their diseases treated etc.

Apart from working with wildlife I'm also very curious about the differences and similarities between the veterinary medicine I learn in school and the actual veterinary medicine practiced in the field. I'm as well interested in the differences between Belgium and Namibia on both a veterinary and a cultural level.

To summarize, my request to you is whether you would consider allowing me, or helping me find a placement, to do an externship with veterinarian(s) taking care of wildlife. Preferably for a few weeks during the months of October/November 2021. The current COVID situation might complicate the plan a bit, however I will do everything necessary in order to succeed.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

I look forward to your answer.

You can contact me by phone: +32493686718 or through email: [jakliengoossens@gmail.com](mailto:jakliengoossens@gmail.com)

Yours sincerely,  
Jaklien Goossens