**How to prepare for your vet school application, beginning in High School**

**Terminology**:  
Large Animal- food/farm animals. Cattle, horses, pigs, goats, chickens, alpacas, etc.  
Small Animal- household pets. Dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, etc.   
Vet School Application- required computer-based application that will be completed your junior or senior year of college  
Animal Experience- any hours working with animals (see notes about pets)  
Vet Experience- any hours worked under the supervisions of a vet (ie in a vet clinic AND able to converse with the vet)  
Shadowing- time spent with a veterinarian that is not paid; observation

**Volunteering**:

* Keep in mind that the vet school rewards students for being involved in the community!
* Stay active! Whether that is through your church, local honor society service or just helping out at a nursing home…help out and get involved somehow.
* What counts as volunteering? Any work done that is not compensated for by money.
* Can I count babysitting my brother/sister as volunteer work? Technically, yes…but don’t expect anyone to reward you for it. In fact, expect some questions pertaining to why you felt the need to put these hours down on your application in your interview for Vet School.
  + Keep your volunteer hours in a ‘quality’ mindset, not ‘quantity’. Thirty or forty hours volunteered at your local shelter or nursing home will be rewarded much more heavily than 100 hours of babysitting or raking leaves for mom and dad ever will.
* The vet school looks for well rounded students…therefore, do not feel like all of your volunteer hours need to be animal related. Serving dinner to a youth home on Thanksgiving Day is an awesome way to give back!
* Most importantly of all, KEEP A JOURNAL OF YOUR HOURS!!! Every time you volunteer somewhere, log the date it took place, a little note about what you did, who was the coordinator/overseer, and how many hours you participated. This will all be required information for your vet school application. By the time you are a junior or senior in college applying for vet school, you may not remember what you did as a freshman in High School!
  + Logging all your volunteer hours is EXTREMELY beneficial to you once you begin the application process. In many instances, you may find that you do not count all of your volunteer hours in your vet school application. Having it all logged on one location will make it easy for you to browse all your experiences at one time and choose a select few that you feel would look best on your application.

**Animal Experience:**

The following are suggestions on how to gain animal experience in high school

* FFA: This is a great organization that enables students (whether you live on a ranch or an apartment) to gain valuable hands-on experience with large animals. They also put on competitions that make students eligible to win awards, sometimes for college funds.
* 4-H: Another wonderful organization that aides students in developing skills necessary to work with large animals. This group will be able to focus more on equine care and sports, but also works largely with other farm species.
* Shelter: talk to your local shelter and see if there is an age limit to volunteering there. If not, start going and helping out!
* Vet Clinic: ask your veterinarian if there is an age limit to volunteering as a kennel tech at the clinic. If there is not, then schedule a few days every week or so to go in and help clean the kennels, walk the dogs, wash the pans, etc. Often times, if a paid position opens up it will be offered to you since you already know their routine!
  + Please take note that working in a veterinary clinic as a kennel tech does not constitute ‘vet hours’. These hours are designated to time spent with a vet while they are doing veterinary work. You MUST be in the room, able to converse with the vet in order to count hours as ‘vet hours’. All other hours accumulated at veterinary clinics or hospitals are to be logged as ‘animal hours’.
* Farm work: for those of you who live on property that cares for large animals such as horses, goats, pigs, cows, sheep, etc., then you should log a rough estimate of the amount of quality time spent with these animals at the end of your high school career
  + Keep in mind that if you log 20,000 hours of large animal experience just because you raised cows, the admission committee may question the quality of these hours during your interview with some questions pertaining to time spent with the animals. Remember that if a number looks abnormally large to you on paper, it will probably look abnormal to the admissions members as well!
* Household Pets: everyone has them. Unfortunately, these hours really do not count towards your vet school application at all. The only instances where some hours will be rewarded is if an extremely sick pet was in your care for longer than a week or so. For instance, if your pet has diabetes and you gave insulin shots three times a day for five years, you might want to put those hours on your application. Again, keep the number reasonable.
* Again, LOG ALL THESE HOURS, dates, etc. A little sentence here and there will help jog your memory come interview time when the committee members are asking what you did with 4-H your freshman year of high school!!

**Vet Experience:**

* As a freshman/sophomore, you will be limited to the veterinary clinics that will allow you to shadow/work in their facilities. The common age for many places is 16 years of age to work in a clinic.
* If you have the time to do a work study, or to hold a job, then apply at a veterinary clinic in town. They will not pay much, but the hours earned will be invaluable once you begin to apply to vet school!
* If your local clinics are not hiring, then ask if you could shadow one of their vets on the weekends, or whatever days they would like to have you.
  + Don’t get your feelings hurt if they say no…some clinics literally do not have the room in their offices to hold an extra person! Keep trying at other places around town and fill out applications to all the clinics so that they have yours on file the next time an opening comes up!
* Most importantly of all, LOG THOSE HOURS

**Log/Notebook:**

* Sick of this yet? Log all your hours and experiences!!! Names, dates, hours, and simple sentences to help remember all those memories!
* A computer based file is recommended since notebooks are easily lost. BUT, remember to back-up your files so that they are not lost due to a virus or other such devastations!!