

Work Placement Information - Zoo



Please read the following before applying for a placement.

Our placements

It is our aim to show students the reality of being a zookeeper in a modern zoo. Students will assist in many tasks relating to animal husbandry and zoo upkeep. These tasks may include the following:

- Cleaning enclosures and enclosure furnishings. This takes up the majority of the day.
- Helping to prepare and distribute food. This also includes sorting food deliveries.
- Maintaining our keeper areas eg. food prep room and hay and straw barn.
- Park upkeep- this will include washing windows, weeding, picking litter, emptying bins and sweeping pathways.
- Preparing, distributing and cleaning enrichment devices.
- You may get the chance to observe training sessions, basic veterinary care, health monitoring (eg. weighing). These opportunities do not always arise and cannot be guaranteed.

We mainly care for animals that do not enjoy or tolerate close human contact- if you are expecting to be handling, grooming or playing with animals then this is not the placement for you.

Most of our work takes place outside in all weathers. Students must be prepared and come equipped with the right clothing for this eg. raincoats, sun hats, sun cream etc.

Our zoo is split into five sections;

Paddocks and Farm

Birds

Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates

Primates and Small Mammals

Large Carnivores

We are not able to take requests to work on a particular section. Students are not permitted to work on the Large Carnivore section. Depending on the current governments' Avian Influenza guidelines, students may not be permitted to work on the Bird section. Students will work on a rotation dependant on the length of their placement, for example;

One week= one section

Two weeks= two sections

Six weeks= two week blocks on three sections

Our days are 8am - 4pm which includes two thirty minute breaks. Placements run from Monday-Friday.

The minimum placement duration we offer is one week. There is no maximum and we welcome applications from students who require long term placements.

We can only offer up to three placements per week therefore these places are in high demand and fill up quickly.

Who can apply?

Students at GCSE/A Level:

You are welcome to apply if you are genuinely seeking a career working with animals/wildlife. Students in higher education need to undertake an animal related work placement in order to complete their course, although we do accept applications from GCSE level and A level students we need to prioritise students in higher education so places are very limited.

If you are aged 14 or 15:

For insurance purposes we can only accept applications from students aged 14 or 15 if the placement is part of your schools official work placement scheme. If your school doesn't have this or we are fully booked on the set dates then we will be unable to accept your application. We do not accept applications for students who will be under 14 at the time of the placement.

Students in higher education - Capel Manor (Enfield), Shuttleworth College and Oaklands College:

We reserve placements each year for the above colleges. If you study at one of the above, please liaise directly with your tutor or course leader who will process your application for us. Please read this information fully but do not send us your application directly.

Students in higher education:

If you study an animal related course at college/university level (not at an institution listed above), we welcome your application.

Vet students:

We regularly host vet students for their EMS placements. Before you apply please note we do not have an on-site vet and our placements are husbandry based. Applications for placements with our vets (Highfields Practice and IZVG) have to be made to them directly, we have no involvement with their processes. We cannot arrange vet shadowing.

Zoo keeping is a physically demanding role and you must be prepared to be on your feet for the majority of the day. We require a moderate level of fitness. You must also be prepared to be outside in all weathers and occasionally may have to work in areas with high temperature and humidity.

You will have supervision throughout the day and be working in a small team but you must also be able to follow instructions, adhere to strict health and safety rules and work independently.

We work in an environment that exposes us to many known allergens including (but not limited to) nuts, wheat, eggs, crustaceans etc. This also includes environmental allergens such as pollen, hay, dust, animal fur etc. Please consider this in your application.

Some species require us to wear face coverings around them and their food, with no exceptions. Disposable PPE is provided.

We have no accommodation available for students and there is no public transport that directly services the site. The closest train stations are Broxbourne and Bayford (it is not possible to walk from these stations). You must consider this before applying. Any costs incurred for either accommodation or travel are your own responsibility.

Before you apply

Before applying please ensure you have read all of the information above and ensure you meet the criteria. You must know the dates that you are applying for before you contact us, we cannot process your application without this. All dates must be at least 6 weeks in advance.

Complete our application form and send it to workexperience@hertfordshirezoo.com
We will not accept posted applications.

One of the team will contact you. Our work placement team are not office based and we are unable to check the emails daily, please have patience in waiting for a response. We kindly ask you to not phone to chase your application as we will not have the information you need whilst not in the office. Please do not send us any paperwork from your school/college etc at this stage.

The application process

Upon receiving your application, we will ensure you meet the criteria and your supporting statement meets our expectations. If the dates you have applied for are available we will contact you to arrange an interview.

If your application does not meet our criteria or we have no availability we will let you know. You are still welcome to reapply in the future.

Our interviews take place on-site (you will not have to pay an entry fee) and last approximately 15 minutes. Our interview slots are between 3-4pm on Tuesdays-Sundays. If you are not local we can arrange a phone interview, Our interviews are short, informal chats with one of our keeper team. It gives us a chance to get to know you and assess your suitability and for you to hear more about our placements and ask any questions you may have.

We aim to contact you with the outcome of the interview within a week of the interview date. If we do not feel you are suitable, or there are more suitable applicants we may have to turn your application down at this point. If this is the case, we hope you found the application and interview process a positive learning opportunity.

A successful application

If your interview was successful we will let you know via email. At this point we will send you our work placement handbook which covers everything you need to know prior to your first day. This includes our code of conduct, health and safety information, clothing guidelines (we cannot provide clothing) and what to bring with you etc.

If you have paperwork from your school/college/university, it is at this stage you can send it to us. Digital copies are preferred. If you require a copy of any of our risk assessments or employers liability insurance information this can be provided.

Your placement

Your placement will commence on the agreed date and will start with a health and safety induction. Although all our placements start at 8am each day, we will ask you to arrive for an 8.30am start on your first day. This gives our keepers time to prepare before meeting you for the induction.

We are always on hand to answer any questions you may have before or during your placement. In the rare instance that you have an issue, we ask that you discuss it with us directly as soon as possible so that we can resolve it together. In very rare circumstances we have had to end a student's placement before the agreed end date due to cases of gross misconduct or we have felt students are not participating appropriately.

In order to get the most out of this opportunity, we encourage you to ask questions, work hard, show enthusiasm and engage with the team.

After your placement

Zoo keepers usually undertake years of training and education before getting paid work. Unfortunately our work placements do not lead to jobs with us.

If you would like a reference, please email the team after your placement and we will organise one for you. You must ask for a reference within 3 months of your placement ending, we will not provide references after this time. Please note references will be sent as an email attachment.

Volunteering

Our volunteer program runs separately from our work placement program. We have occasionally had instances where students have applied to volunteer after finding out we have no available work placements. Our volunteer program is for people outside of education who wish to help long-term, there is not defined start and end dates like there is for work placements. We do not follow the same learning structure for volunteers that we do for work placement students. We will not sign off on work placement hours that have been undertaken as a volunteer.

If you would like to apply to volunteer after you have finished your placement and you fit the volunteer criteria then we will welcome your application. Please note volunteers must be over 18.

Please use workexperience@hertfordshirezoo.com for all communication regarding work placements.

Our team run our work placement program alongside their zoo keeping roles, therefore are usually unable to take phone calls as they are not office based.