

Full notes

Notes for The Animal Management and Husbandry Online Placement Tool program:

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A program to help veterinary students prepare for, and get the most out of, EMS placements

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Introduction

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

Hello! Welcome to the Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool. My name is Lucy and I've just finished my third year studying veterinary medicine in the UK. Along with colleagues in Bristol University and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, we've created this online tool to assist veterinary students in preparing for their EMS placements in animal management and husbandry. I've recently been there myself and I really did enjoy my placements, but I can relate to how you may be feeling before starting your first EMS placement as a vet student. Hopefully through this program we can answer any little queries you may have, as well as give you some hints and tips on how to get the most out of your placements.

Introduction

What is the Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool?

- This is a computer aided learning program that will help you prepare for and get the most out of animal management, husbandry and general pre-clinical placements

Who is the Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool designed for?

- It is primarily designed for students studying veterinary medicine in the UK, who are preparing for “pre-clinical” animal management and/or husbandry EMS
- The program will also be useful for veterinary students from universities in other countries doing similar placements
- If you are not a student in the UK please get your EMS coordinator to review the contents of this program, to highlight areas relevant to your specific requirements

Why did we design the Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool?

- We want you to get the most out of your EMS placements
- Placement providers, EMS coordinators and students have said that a little preparation in advance would be helpful

Introduction

About this Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool

- You will be able to find out about:
 - What to expect from your placements and what your placements expect from you
 - How you should prepare for your placements
- Throughout the program you will see tips and quotes from students – these are all directly from vet students!
 - They are all regarding issues students found particularly useful, interesting and/or important when on and preparing for their placements
 - There are also tips from EMS coordinators and placement providers, in areas which have been highlighted as commonly encountered issues
- In designing this program we looked at frequent difficulties and concerns encountered by students and used this to guide the content



"I found the more prepared I was, the more I got out of a placement"

Quote from a student.

Preparation

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

Preparing well for your placements is essential. In this section, we will give you advice on how to organise your placement and what you should do before you begin. For example we'll answer questions such as "what protective clothing will I need?", "what equipment should I take?" and "what will I be expected to know?"

Preparation

Do's – General



- **Do** organise your EMS placements well in advance:
 - Many popular placements get booked up months in advance
 - It's good to have time to re-arrange placements in case you can't go to your first choice
- **Do** organise EMS placements at appropriate farms or establishments
 - Your university may have certain requirements e.g. is there a minimum number of animals?
 - Consider seasonal variation of work and check what system your placement uses e.g. do they batch calve; if so, when?
 - Don't just choose fancy, big farms – you may not be able to do as much and you want to learn about more typical farms
 - Think about your level of experience when choosing a placement
- Your university may have a list of placements attended by previous students which you can use
- Some placements will require a headed letter from your university to confirm you're a veterinary student, and some may ask for references

Preparation

Do's – Contact your placement

EMS Coordinator tip: "Don't call farmers after 9pm, as they may have to get up early for milking"

- **Do** get in touch a week or so before your placement
 - Do contact them yourself – this is **your responsibility**, not your parents'!
- **Do** find out beforehand who will be your point of contact or supervisor and how to contact them
- **Do** ask in advance:
 - What **time** they expect you on the first day and your rough hours of work – think about what you need for the whole day e.g. enough food
 - What they expect you to **wear and bring** e.g. boiler suit, waterproofs
 - If you are staying with the farmer, make sure you know what the arrangements are e.g. do you need towels/bedding, will you cook for yourself, can you wash your clothes?

Student tip: "Practise driving there if you're really unsure so you don't need to worry about getting lost or being late on your first day"

- **Do** think about directions and parking
 - SatNav might not work for your placement; your placement provider may give you better directions
 - Ask where to park (not where the milk tanker parks!)
 - Print out directions and/or a map if you are unsure how to get there

Preparation

Do turn up!



- It is extremely unprofessional to fail to turn up to an arranged EMS placement
- It creates a very bad impression of you
- It also puts placements off having other students in the future
- Make sure you have the phone number of someone at the placement, so you can contact them if you are held up

Preparation

Do's – what to take with you



- Your lunch (!)
 - On a farm, you are unlikely to be near facilities to buy food
 - Think about your hours of work – if you start milking at 5am and don't leave until 6pm, you will need **more than a standard packed lunch!**
- Your university ID; some placements will want to check this
- Your **feedback form, learning outcomes, skills list** and health and safety form (if your university expects or provides them)
- If your course requires you to fill in a report, take this on the first day and mention it to your point of contact – don't leave it until the last day
- Relevant course notes (not all of them – see knowledge and skills, later in this section)
- **Contact details** for your EMS coordinator, in case of problems

Student tip: "Have everything in a sturdy bag (like a supermarket 'Bag for Life') by the door ready to go so you can't forget anything!"

Preparation

Do's – what to take with you: clothing



- Consider taking some **spare clothes**, in case you need to get changed (you may need to work in an isolation unit, or get very wet/dirty)
- Everything should be washable and cleanable for biosecurity
- If you are unsure, always phone and ask your placement

Student tip: "Make sure your shoes or boots are comfy and fit well – you're on your feet all day and you can't run in big boots!"

Small Animal Placements

- Think about where you are going – if you will have contact with clients you may be required to wear smarter clothes than if you are working behind the scenes with animals all day
- If in doubt, **go smart on the first day**, then adapt accordingly
- In a vet practice, you may be expected to wear a white coat/scrub top – this may or may not be supplied so ask your practice

Preparation

Do's – what to take with you: clothing



Large Animal Placements i.e. farm and equine

- Warm clothing e.g. hat, body warmer, vest tops, welly socks – especially if you are working overnight or going to be out all day
- Boiler suit

Farm Placements e.g. lambing, dairy, pig

- Waterproof trousers and parlour top
- Wellies – steel toe-capped if you have them, don't worry if not

Equine Placements

- NOT your dairy waterproofs, but a jacket may be needed
- If you have a riding hat, take it (it is for safety when handling horses as well as riding)
- Some placements prefer sturdy or steel toe capped boots to wellies – check with them
- Gloves can be useful

Preparation

Do's – Knowledge & Skills



- **Do** know basic terminology relevant to the species e.g. fetlock, tup, steer
- **Do** use placements as a chance to revise what you've been taught
 - Students say knowing **gestation periods**, the basic **yearly cycle** (including the reproductive cycle) and **basic husbandry** are particularly useful
- **Do** try and revise around the area if you know the sort of placement you are going to
- If relevant, try to discuss topical issues about the species
- **Do** remind yourself of basic **animal handling skills**

Student tip: "If you know the breed on the farm, look up a few facts about them e.g. do they have more singles or twins, is it a good mothering breed? Farmers are often proud of their breed and they love it if a student knows a bit about it!"

Preparation

Do's – Knowledge & Skills

- Your knowledge doesn't need to be detailed – these placements are about **animal husbandry** and not about clinical skills as a vet (remember husbandry skills are vital to your future career)
 - Get involved! Your placement is where you will learn from experience
 - This is about you developing animal handling skills, understanding different working systems and developing communication skills
- What if I don't know how to do something that's expected of me?
 - Don't worry! Always say if you don't know how to do something



"If I'm asked to do something I haven't done before, I just say 'I'm afraid I haven't done that before, could you show me how to do that?'"



"I appreciate students letting me know when they don't know how to do something BEFORE something has already gone wrong; mistakes can be dangerous and expensive and they're often avoidable"

Quotes from a student, and a placement provider.

Preparation

Don'ts – General



- **Don't** turn up late
- **Don't** turn up looking unprofessional. Feedback has indicated that farmers prefer:
 - **NO** loose hair – shoulder length or long hair should be tied back, and remember a spare hair band or clip
 - **NO** long or false fingernails, or coloured nail varnish
 - **NO** jewellery – small stud earrings are usually okay, but you may be asked to remove other jewellery
 - Some farmers won't appreciate patterned “stylish” wellies and will see these as unprofessional
- **Don't** turn up without appropriate protective clothing
- **Don't** turn up with dirty clothing (protective or general)!
 - To a farmer (or yard owner), dirt may have come from another farm (or stable) and so is a biosecurity risk
 - If you're driving, also think about the cleanliness of your car
- **Don't** expect to have set lunch breaks or leave at 5pm 'on the dot'
 - If you need to leave early e.g. doctor's appointment, ask and let someone know in advance

What to Expect

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

If you don't know what to expect at a placement, it can make your first day quite daunting. In this section, we give you advice on what to expect in different types of placement, as well as some general hints from students.

What to Expect

The aims of animal husbandry, pre-clinical EMS

- The aim is for you to gain **practical experience** in animal management and handling, and to **appreciate the real work place** – the exact requirements will vary between universities, but the following is a good guide:
- On completion, you are expected to:
 - Be able to **handle animals** safely and with confidence and competence
 - Understand the **day-to-day routine** in different animal systems, including feeding, management, breeding, the basic economic framework and production (if relevant)
 - Understand **farming as a profession**
 - Have developed **communication skills** and the ability to work as **part of a team**



"I loved being involved in the running of the farm and I learnt so much – everything we did in lectures about farming systems makes much more sense now!"



"It was great to have so much contact with animals and I feel much more confident now"

Quotes from students.

What to Expect

General



- The RCVS requires all veterinary students in the UK to do 12 weeks of pre-clinical, animal husbandry, EMS
- Each university will have different guidelines and requirements for completing these 12 weeks – you will have to conform to these requirements
- The following pages will give you a rough idea of what to expect on possible placements – don't worry if you aren't doing some of the placements or your placement isn't described
- If you have any queries, speak to your EMS coordinator

What to Expect

General



- You will be expected to **work hard** and get your hands dirty
 - This includes participating in all tasks, including those which may be mundane and routine – and may have nothing to do with animals!
- Working with animals can be dangerous
 - Always **follow instructions** and be alert
 - Do not attempt to do anything that you do not feel comfortable doing
- You may not have been taught everything you need to know
 - That's ok, you're **there to learn** and you're not expected to be perfect on your first day
- Occasionally there may be situations where your opinions differ from others', including the placement provider
 - However, if what you're being asked to do is legal and safe, it is probably best to continue to help – but you may wish to discuss it further when you're back at vet school
- Remember, **you get out what you put in!**

What to Expect

What NOT to expect!

- You are doing these placements to see how animals are handled and kept normally – you are NOT there to be a vet!
- Don't expect to be paid – you are there to learn; if any money is offered, it should be received gratefully and seen as a bonus, not a right
- Don't expect your placement to teach you every imaginable job – some simply won't do all of them and others may not be happy letting students do certain jobs



"All of my friends did something different on their placement... I've realised that for everything you don't get to do, there's normally something else you did do instead"

Quote from a student.

- If your university requires you to write a report, remember to be sensitive when asking for certain information
 - You can ask but respect that your placement may not be willing to share all the information with you, particularly financial or business details

What to Expect

... on a farm placement



- You may be required to help with:
 - General daily **management** e.g. feeding, 'mucking out'/changing bedding, cleaning
 - Administration of routine medications such as iron injections in piglets
 - **Routine procedures** such as foot bathing, hoof trimming, ear tagging, moving livestock
- You may do some, all, or different jobs to those described. Some placements may let you watch, others may expect you to help out
- Some vet schools and farmers will require you to stay on farm for the duration of the placement and work the same (long!) hours as the farmer
- Remember that **farm work is seasonal** – make sure you are going at an appropriate time

What to Expect

...on a lambing placement

Student tip: "A good moisturiser is a life-saver! Your hands are wet all day and they get chapped and sore... moisturising every night before bed makes a huge difference!"

- Lambing is very rewarding, but can be tough!
 - If you are required to work the same hours as the farmer, you will need to be prepared to do night shifts
 - The work will be physically demanding, so make sure you **eat well**
- This is a stressful time of year for sheep farmers, so don't take it personally if they are short tempered
- You may be an essential pair of hands, and the farmer may be relying on you
- You may be involved in helping to **deliver lambs** and ensuring they thrive, **caring for orphan lambs**, castrating and tail docking, and general management
- Advice for staying overnight at a placement is included in the "Tips" section



"My favourite thing about lambing was that it was very hands on!"

Quote from a student.

What to Expect

... on a dairy placement

- If you are expected to work the early morning milking, you can expect especially **early starts** – 4 or 5am is not unusual!



- As well as general farm jobs described in 'general farm placements', the following are specific examples of jobs you may see, help or assist with – remember every placement is different:
 - **Milking** the cows
 - **Cleaning** the parlour after milking
 - Identifying cows to serve
 - **Calving** (depending on the type of farm and time of year)
 - Feeding and general management of calves

Student tip: "If you're not sure how to use the crush correctly, it's worth asking the farmer to show you how to operate it safely"

What to Expect



... on an equine placement

- Most equine placements are likely to involve a combination of feeding, mucking out stables, tacking up, cleaning tack, brushing down horses, turning out the horses and clearing poo off the fields or 'poo picking'
- Depending on your ability and the individual placement, you may be able or expected to ride some of the horses
 - You will not be expected to if you do not feel comfortable or safe
 - Do **remember to say** if you have no riding experience!
- If you have little or no experience with horses, consider going to a riding school. If you have lots of experience, you can still learn a lot from a different type of yard, for example a stud or competition yard, or a rescue centre



"There was a kind of 'team spirit' on the yard when we were mucking out – it was hard work physically but we had a laugh as well"

Quote from a student.

What to Expect

... on a pig placement

EMS Coordinator Tip: “Some pig units require you to have no contact with other pigs for a set time before entering their unit (this includes any practicals in uni or pigs you have at home!). Make sure you check this and comply with regulations to prevent the spread of serious diseases”

- Depending on the purpose of your farm, you may see, help or assist in some of the following:
 - **Serving** gilts and sows
 - Typical **management** of piglets including feeding and possibly medicating, including iron injections
 - Boar behaviour, handling, health and safety
 - Weighing animals to monitor growth and select for the abattoir
- **Biosecurity** is often particularly high on pig farms – you may be expected to shower in and out
- Some pig farms will operate a batch system and have weeks of serving, farrowing, weaning, etc.
 - Make sure you are going in a week you will be able to do something
- These placements differ from other types of farm; it may be worth getting more information from your vet school before you go

What to Expect

... on a small animal placement

- Most small animal placements are likely to involve basic jobs such as **cleaning, feeding, walking, handling** etc.
- Small animal placements are often a great opportunity to practice your **communication and team skills**, as many are likely to employ multiple workers



"I learnt so many dog breeds from working in a kennel, because the staff would refer to them by their breed rather than name, so they might say "can you feed the border terrier?". It made them easy to remember"

Quote from a student.

... if your small animal placement is at a veterinary practice

- This is an opportunity to learn about animal care and handling from vet nurses
- Developing a good relationship with the nurses can make or break your training and your career – it is important that you appreciate them
- For more guidance on vet nursing placements, look at the [VN Online Clinical Placement Tool](http://www.ems.vet.ed.ac.uk/vetnursing/) (<http://www.ems.vet.ed.ac.uk/vetnursing/>)

What to Expect

... on a poultry placement

EMS Coordinator Tip: "Try to understand every aspect of the business and not just the day-to-day management of the flock"

- There is a **great variety** of types of poultry placement e.g. intensive commercial broiler producers, commercial egg units, small specialist poultry breeders
- The placements can be useful in understanding intensive livestock production, integrated systems, population medicine, biosecurity and aspects of human health

... on a specialist placement

e.g. rabbits, exotics, wildlife, zoo

- Naturally these placements will vary considerably, but you can still expect to learn skills similar to those developed in other placements
 - Be involved in basic **management** such as feeding, housing and hygiene
 - **Handling and restraint** of animals
 - Management of breeding and rearing of offspring
 - If possible, it is useful to practise sexing some species e.g. rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters etc.
 - Other tasks specific to your choice of placement
- **You can always ask** the placement what jobs you can anticipate helping with

Working with People

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

While on your placements, and in your future career as a vet, you will have to work with many different types of people – and try to get along with them all! In this section we give you advice on how to work well with others and how to thrive in the workplace.

Working with People

... why is it important?

- Being able to work well with other people is a vital part of your future career, whichever area you decide to work in



“As a vet you need to be able to talk to people from all walks of life – the specialist at the referral centre, the cleaner at the practice, and all the different clients – and gain their respect”

Quote from a placement provider.

- EMS coordinators have highlighted that learning communication skills is a key goal when on your pre-clinical EMS
 - The Veterinary Defence Society (who insure vets against client complaints) says that many claims against vets contain some level of communication breakdown
- Even if you don't intend to work in the area of your placement, you can still learn and practise important skills regarding working with other people



“When I met one particular student, I had my doubts that we would get along... But then she got her waterproofs on and got stuck in straightaway – she worked just like all the other staff and I was impressed”

Quote from a placement provider.

Working with People

Do's



- **Do** treat all staff with respect
 - They are giving up their time for you **free of charge**
 - You are being taught skills it would be difficult to simulate in university – appreciate the time people are giving to you
 - **Learn** from the people you are working with – they do this every day and will have a lot of practical knowledge to impart
 - Remember to **thank people** for their time, especially if they've gone out of their way to help you
 - Referring specifically to what you appreciated will show that your thanks are genuine
- **Do** make an effort to get on with any other students on the placement
- **Do** try to become part of the team and muck in and help out
 - It's ok to socialise with your colleagues outside the workplace
 - If you really fit in, you might be asked to come back – as a paid employee!

Working with People

Do's – show your enthusiasm and motivation

- **Do** smile and say 'hi' to people when you walk in/arrive
- **Do** offer to help, even with the boring and mundane tasks e.g. mucking out
- **Do** follow instructions and do as you're asked



"Every farmer is proud of their farm. If you ask questions and appreciate the farm as a whole, they'll be only too happy to tell you more"

- Do ask if you don't understand something or are unsure about handling an animal; be it cat, dog, horse, calf etc.
 - If you feel uncomfortable, don't do something without asking for help

Student Tip: "Do have a sense of humour – people will warm to you if you don't take yourself too seriously"

Working with People

Do's – show your enthusiasm and motivation

- Even if you don't want to specialise in the area of your placement, it's important you still get **stuck in and look interested** – even if the tasks seem boring at first
 - You're at an early stage in the course and you could change your mind about the area you want to work in
 - Even if the tasks seem repetitive, it's important you gain an appreciation for the work your future clients do
 - You'll get more out of it if you get involved
 - Regardless, you still need to pass your exams!
- **Ask to help** whenever possible – even with cleaning and infection control jobs
- Remember, body language is hugely important (see next slide)



“If students look disinterested then I don't see the point in showing them the interesting things – but if students are enthusiastic even with the mundane tasks... well then I'm happy to give them my time and show them the exciting side of the job”

Quote from a placement provider.

Working with People

Body language



- Being conscious of the messages your body language is sending is important
- The following body language suggests that you are bored, disinterested and unenthusiastic:
 - Never smiling
 - Slouching
 - Yawning repeatedly
 - Folding arms/hands in pockets
 - Avoiding eye contact/looking down or away
 - Standing away from the focus of activity
 - 'Clock-watching'
- Even if you are genuinely interested, you will be working long hours and may be tired, making it easy to slip into negative body language
 - Pay attention to the signals you're putting out



"I noticed another student always standing slightly away from whatever we were doing. It made it look like she wasn't interested and consequently she rarely got asked to come forward and get involved"

Quote from a student.

Working with People

Body language



- To look interested and enthusiastic:
 - Stand up straight
 - Make eye contact regularly
 - Avoid crossing your arms
 - Look and lean towards the focus of the group
 - Smile and be animated when appropriate
- Often the best way to have good body language is to be genuinely interested!
 - Pay attention, ask questions and get involved and you will find yourself naturally giving off positive body language
- Remember to read other people's body language too
 - If people look tired or stressed, maybe wait a bit before asking a question

Working with People

Don'ts

- **Don't** criticise or contradict any members of staff
 - This is their job and they know what they're doing



"Don't come in being a know it all!"

- **Don't** think you are above doing the mundane, dirty and repetitive jobs
 - This annoys people and will have a bad impact on your experience
- **Don't** carry out tasks without being directed to do so and without knowing how
- **Don't** break confidentiality (see next section)
- **Don't** be embarrassed if you feel faint or hurt yourself – tell someone!
- **Don't** start an intimate relationship with any of the staff
 - If you genuinely like someone, and it's appropriate, wait until the placement is over
- **Don't** expect to get along perfectly with everyone you will ever work with
 - Part of the job is being able to work with anyone – and it's a good life skill!
- **Don't** ever get your parents to ring the placement on your behalf – YOU are the one in the workplace and it is your responsibility

Working with People

It's the real workplace

- No workplace is perfect, and the veterinary and farming world is no different
 - You may see and hear things that you deem unnecessary and even unprofessional
- You will also witness exemplary behaviour from the very best of role models
- Everyone finds joining a new workplace daunting, and you are entering a particularly challenging area of work
 - Here are some tips from your peers:



"Don't worry if you can't do everything straight away"

"Try to start each day afresh"

"Don't be too hard on yourself – you're still learning!"

"Take negative comments on board, but learn from them instead of letting them get to you"

"Have confidence in your abilities – you're better than you think!"



"Don't take it personally if someone is having a bad day"

"Try to get something from every placement, even if it is just 'this is not how I want to do things'"

Professionalism

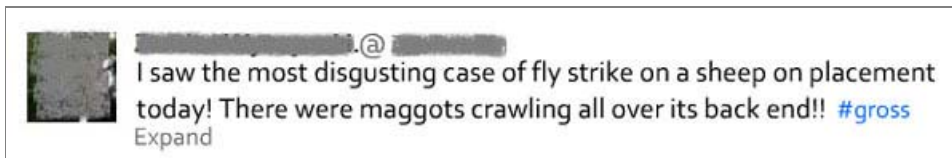
If you cannot use audio, the text is:

Being professional is important even at this early stage in your career and is something that was highlighted when we spoke to EMS coordinators and placement providers when we were creating this program. The areas covered in this section can't be stressed enough, and are vital to creating a good impression at your placements.

Professionalism

Confidentiality

- Maintaining confidentiality is an **essential** professional requirement and is frequently raised as an issue by placement providers
 - It is never too early to start learning this 'skill'
- **Don't discuss named places of work or individuals:**
 - In front of other professionals e.g. do not discuss one farmer's lambing losses with another
 - In public where you could be overheard
 - Once back at the vet school
 - On a social network site
- And think about how a member of the public would feel if they saw this:



Professionalism

Confidentiality

- You might not mean to break confidentiality, but think about where you are and who might be able to overhear you before discussing sensitive information. The below examples are **not professional**:



"There's an outbreak of Strangles in the yard at Lower Upton"

"There are lots of dogs with kennel cough at Silver Tree Boarding Kennels"

Hypothetical quotes from students.

- These comments could have a big negative impact on places' business
- If you see a particularly interesting case that you want to discuss, then a solution might be to '**anonymise**' it and discuss it in an appropriate location e.g.:



"I saw a farm with a sudden increase in the number of abortions; they called the vet to help diagnose it"

Hypothetical quote from a student.

- You can learn a lot by discussing with friends but be professional and anonymise – the above is a good example of how to discuss your placement while **maintaining confidentiality**

Professionalism

Mobile Phones

Student tip: "Keep your phone in a small sealable plastic bag to keep it clean – just in case it falls into a pile of something!"

- On a farm you **may be expected to** carry your mobile and be **contactable** at all times e.g. if you're working in a separate lambing shed or on a night shift
 - **Check** this with the farmer when you first arrive
 - If this is the case, make sure you can hear your phone when it rings and that it is charged up



- Just because you have permission to keep your phone with you, it does not mean you have permission to make personal phone calls and/or texts
 - **Don't reply to private calls or texts** when you're working – it's unprofessional
- As a general rule of thumb, keep your phone on **silent or vibrate** unless told otherwise
- Always wait until a quiet, appropriate moment if you want to reply to private messages e.g. your lunch break
- Make sure your phone can't fall out of your pocket – you're unlikely to find it again

Professionalism

Photos & videos



- Taking photos and videos is potentially a very sensitive issue and should be handled with extreme care and consideration
- Never take photos of potentially sensitive material e.g. nasty injuries, abortions
- Consider the implications of these photos getting into the public domain
- If it is appropriate to take a photo, ask permission from the placement provider and owner of the animal, if different
 - Carefully consider what they gave you permission to do with the photo e.g. putting it in your casebook might be ok, but putting it on a public website, such as Facebook, would not

Professionalism

Photos & Videos

- **Never** post these photos or videos on public websites e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter
- Consider where a photo you post might end up if access to the area is electronic and not controlled – it's easy to copy things off the internet



“How do you think a farmer would feel if he saw a video focusing on one lame cow on the internet – with a stream of comments underneath saying that it needed to be reported to the authorities?”

- If you have any questions about appropriate use of photos, videos or consent, it is recommended that you contact your EMS coordinator or an appropriate member of staff at your school
- If your university discovers that you have used photographs inappropriately, you could be referred to a professionalism committee for breaching their regulations

Professionalism

Health & Safety

- Always follow instructions and do not attempt to do anything which you do not feel comfortable doing
- Treat all **male animals** (bulls, boars and stallions) and **mothers with young** (e.g. sows with litters, cows with calves) as particularly **dangerous**; never try and work with these animals without **specific help and instruction first**



"Anything that a farmer expressly asks you NOT to do is for your own good, and that of other people and animals"

- Farms are likely to have lots of large machinery, tractors etc. – make sure the person operating these knows where you are and don't try and slip between any small gaps
- Take care when handling **chemicals** and veterinary **medicines** - follow instructions and wear protective clothing if necessary e.g. gloves

Professionalism

Potential zoonoses on placements (not an exhaustive list – there are many more!)	
Sheep	Orf, Toxoplasma, Q Fever, Enzootic Abortion of Ewes
Sheep & Cattle	Cryptosporidia, Salmonella, E.coli, Ringworm, Campylobacter
Cattle	Leptospirosis, Tuberculosis
Horses	Ringworm
Cats	Toxoplasma

Health & Safety

- You are likely to come into contact with a variety of diseases, some of which are **zoonotic** (can be transferred from animals to people)
 - **Hygiene** is really important, for your own health and to prevent transfer between animals
 - If you are ill you may be unable to complete the placement and may have to do it again
 - Some of these diseases are more serious than a day or two of diarrhoea – **take it seriously!** If in doubt consult your doctor
 - Wash your hands before eating, and before and after going to the toilet
 - Check with your EMS coordinator about TB vaccination requirements
 - **Don't think it will never happen to you!**
- Contact your EMS coordinator for health and safety tips for your specific placement

Professionalism

Health & Safety

The following are tips from placement providers and EMS coordinators:



"There are lots of different crushes including homemade ones. Students should always ask to be shown how to use the specific on-farm crush"

"Students 'know' an adult cow weighs 600kg, but they don't realise what that means in terms of raw brute strength!"

"It's easy to underestimate how dangerous quads can be. You shouldn't be driving quad bikes or tractors without certified training"



"If on placement you are asked to do anything dangerous, try to tactfully discuss this with the farmer at the time, and if it is not resolved contact your EMS coordinator immediately"

"Don't listen to music through headphones. You won't hear machinery, animals spooking, or people trying to attract your attention, so you could get hurt"

Contact your EMS coordinator for health and safety tips relevant to your specific placement

Professionalism

Work Ethic

- Remember your place – you are a vet student in the early stages of your course
 - The people you will be working with will have years of experience
 - If people do things differently to how you've been taught, ask them why. Never act like you know more than them or your way is better – you may well be wrong and you'll only annoy them
 - If you are asked to do something, do it! You are there to learn animal husbandry so if you're asked to shovel poo on a pig farm, then that's what needs doing – it's not professional to turn your nose up!
- If your university requires an attendance form, it is unprofessional and unacceptable to ask a placement to sign an incorrect form e.g. for days you weren't there!
- Remember you are **representing your profession and university** and these placements are teaching you valuable skills which are necessary for your career

Tips

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

In this section we have collected tips from students who've been there and done it before you, as well as EMS coordinators and placement providers, to help you get the most out of your placements.

Tips

Getting the most out of your EMS placement

- Take a list of **learning objectives** if you have them and/or set your own
 - Make sure these are **appropriate** to your existing skills, the season of the year and the aims of pre-clinical EMS
 - You need to master the basics before progressing to clinical skills e.g. leading out a horse on your own/learning to condition score and estimate ages of livestock
 - Your university may have a list of aims; speak to your EMS coordinator
- Try to **discuss these with your placement supervisor** early on and review it if appropriate – and when they're not too busy!



“Occasionally staff will just ‘get on with it’ without thinking that the student wants to try – do ask to have a go if you think this has happened”

- If you really enjoy a placement, consider keeping in touch
 - You may decide you want to brush up your handling skills later in the course

Student tip: “Every day I write down at least one thing I’ve learnt or seen, even if it’s something small like opening a tricky gate the first time. Then at the end of the placement I can look back and see how much I’ve learnt”

Tips

Getting the most out of your EMS placement: improving your weaknesses

- Remember everyone has different areas in which they are and aren't comfortable – one of the aims of pre-clinical EMS is to get everyone to a similar level
- EMS is an excellent opportunity to drive your own learning
 - Only you know what your weaknesses are, so focus on improving them and put yourself forward for things you find difficult

Here are some quotes from vet students who improved their own weaknesses:



"It is important to be honest with yourself with what you can and can't do. Try not to pretend that you are overly good at something if you're not! Practice makes perfect"

"I didn't feel confident delivering twin lambs; I found it hard to separate the two in the womb. So I asked the farmer 'the next time a sheep that's expecting twins starts lambing, could you stay with me and talk me through it?'. I'm so glad I did because it made it so much clearer!"



"I could have spent 3 weeks doing equine which I would have really enjoyed and only 1 week doing a pig placement where I didn't feel very confident, but I wouldn't have learnt as much"

Tips

Getting the most out of your EMS

The benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing – these are real comments from 3rd year students about how to get the most out of your placement:

“The more willing you are, the more you will get out of the placement – staff will let you do more and will spend more time answering your questions”

“Hard work and a cheerful attitude always goes down well, even if you make mistakes”



“Ask lots of questions, no matter how silly they sound”

“Try and get involved early on – it'll make your time more valuable”

“Don't worry if you don't understand the farming industry before you go – if you do then it really helps, but if you don't, it's the perfect time to ask questions and learn about it”



“Be pro-active!”

“Don't try to do everything on your own – it's ok to admit you need help”

“Go to different places, don't just spend lots of time at one farm, you'll learn more”



“Ask staff to assign you jobs to do for the week – it's good to have something to focus on that's your responsibility”

Tips

How to be a valuable member of staff

- Be aware of where to stand when moving stock on a farm or working with horses
- Learn how to operate gates and tie suitable knots – if you don't know, ask someone to show you – it's ok to find this difficult initially
- Always leave gates and stable/kennel/cage doors as you found them
- Follow Health and Safety rules – ask about these during your first few days
- If you are shown how to do a job which needs doing regularly, **show initiative** and get on with it when it needs doing e.g. filling up water buckets
 - Check you are allowed to do these things alone – when being shown how to do something you could ask “next time this needs doing, can I just get started or should I always check first?”
- If you want to discuss something or need to ask for help, try and wait until people aren't too busy



“I noticed the staff always cleaned the kennels at the end of the day – when I offered to do it, they were so grateful and I felt really appreciated”

Quote from a student.

Tips

When it's quiet

Student tip: "There's normally something which needs a really thorough clean and it's a good way to get brownie points when it's quiet!"

- Ask someone if there's something you can do to help – then do it, regardless of how tedious or unpleasant it is!
- Try and show your **initiative** – is there anything you can do to prepare for jobs which will be started later or the next day?
- It's a good opportunity to **practice** anything you've been struggling with e.g. tying a good knot



- **Observe the animals** (e.g. can I see and count their respiratory rate?), watch how they interact and how and why their behaviour changes – especially in species you haven't had much contact with
 - As a vet you will need to know what's normal before you can recognise abnormal
- It may be quiet for you, but the staff may have paperwork, phone-calls and business to deal with
 - Again, be aware of your body language!

Tips

Overseas students

- As an overseas student you may experience different difficulties to home students. Here are some tips on how to cope with these:



“Planning and booking UK EMS in advance is important, as popular placements (and those with accommodation) get booked up early, particularly at the start and end of the holiday periods”

“Take a notebook to make a list of local terminology e.g. a chute in America is a cattle crush in the UK and a byre is a cowshed”

“Make sure your EMS coordinator is aware that you’re an overseas students – they might be able to offer you extra help”



“Regardless of your university fees, none of this goes to your EMS placements – you are no different from the local students!”

“Organise any UK EMS prior to booking flights”

All students

- Any overseas EMS should be discussed and agreed with your EMS coordinator before booking
- Remember outside the UK there are different diseases which are high risk e.g. rabies
 - Make sure your vaccines are up to date and you are aware of relevant health and safety

Tips

If you're staying overnight at a placement

- Staying with the farmer's family will give you a **unique opportunity** to truly experience the farming way of life – make the most of it
 - As for all other placements, make sure you are prepared before you go (see the preparation section)
 - Make sure you mention any dietary or medical needs you have (e.g. vegetarian, allergies, medical issues) and offer to take your own food if you have specific requirements



“Staying with the farmer meant I was able to fully immerse myself in the job – I feel like I have a greater appreciation of the job now and I have so much respect for farmers! I'd recommend it if you can”

Quote from a student.

- Take **enough toiletries** etc. to last the entire time – there might not be a supermarket close by, or you might not have time to go

NB: it's not always possible for the farmer to offer accommodation

Tips

If you're staying overnight at a placement



- Show that you're willing to **help around the house** with simple tasks e.g. laying the table for dinner, clearing the table, washing up etc.
- Remember you are in someone's home – show **respect** and always ask before doing anything for the first time.
 - If you need to use the landline to ring home occasionally (you may not be able to get reception on your mobile), ask first and offer payment for the call.
- Consider that hot water may be limited – think about others and don't hog the bathroom!
- At the end of your stay, make sure your room is **clean and tidy** and offer to wash bed linen.
- It is not essential or even expected to give presents – just sending a note, thanking the family for your experience and their hospitality, will be appreciated. But cakes or biscuits are often appreciated, if you are able to bake or buy them.

Tips

Remember, placements aren't paid to provide EMS

Quotes from placement providers:



"Most of the time I like having students with me, but only if they get stuck in and help out. Occasionally we get students who think they are too good to do the same jobs as everyone else and clearly aren't interested – it's like they're here just to tick a box to pass their degree. When that happens I wonder why I bother – I'm not getting paid, so why should I give up my time if people don't want to learn and aren't going to give something back?"



"I always have students working for me over the lambing period. Naturally it slows me down initially, while I'm teaching them what to do. I rely on the fact they'll start being a help once they know what they're doing... If they didn't make an effort, then my time spent teaching would be a waste and I'd really struggle when things got busier"

Tips

Appreciating the value of EMS

We asked students what they enjoyed and found most beneficial about pre-clinical EMS. These are quotes from 3rd and 4th year students:

"Having contact with lots of animals – and being in charge of them!"

"Getting personal tuition by farmers with so much experience"



"Seeing the relationship between management on the farm and welfare and income – and understanding it"

"Being part of a team – and realising that will be so important when I start work"

"I'm much better at handling criticism now, and I can learn something from it"



"I understand horses' behaviour and feel comfortable around them now"

"My communication skills improved a lot – I feel much more confident talking to different people now"

"Being appreciated: the farmer thanked me and said I'd be missed!"



"Getting to practise my animal handling skills, like tipping a sheep and milking a cow"

Tips

5 Golden Rules

If you don't remember anything else, at least remember these:

1. Show **interest and enthusiasm** – most (not all!) other potential slip-ups are less of an issue, or even avoided completely, if you act like you want to be there
2. Offer to **help out** and muck out as much as possible
3. Show **respect** – to all the staff and the work they do every day
4. Make an effort to **get along with everyone** – they will then be more likely to teach you things, as well as offer you more exciting things to do – you might even be offered a job!
5. Be **professional** – turn up on time, do as you're asked and remember confidentiality

Tips

One final tip...

A 'thank you' and a card are really appreciated on your last day!

Frequently Asked Questions

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

On the following pages are some 'Frequently Asked Questions' by students. Think about the answer and what you would do, then go to the following pages to see how your EMS coordinator and older peers would answer them.

FAQs

Think about the answer and what you would do, then go to the following pages to see how your EMS coordinators and older peers would answer them.



1. What should I do when I don't know or am unsure about something I've been asked to do?
2. I'm not sure if I can ask to do a bit more?
3. What should I do if I'm unhappy on my placement?
4. I'm embarrassed because I get nervous around horses – I'm training to be a vet, surely I should be good at handling them already? How do I get around this on my equine placement?
5. I already feel confident handling all animals – does this mean I don't need to do pre-clinical EMS?
6. How long is a week? I've been working until 7pm every day for 7 days, including Saturday and Sunday.
7. What do I do if I think I've seen a welfare case, or something that makes me feel uncomfortable?
8. I thought I would be able to earn money in the holidays and now I'm not going to have time. How do I choose a placement that will definitely pay me?

FAQs

1. What should I do when I don't know or am unsure about something I've been asked to do?

- **Always ask** someone for advice – try to ask at an appropriate moment e.g. not when the farmer is in the middle of something
- Don't just go ahead because you can't find anyone to ask – imagine how you'll feel if you get it wrong

2. I'm not sure if I can ask to do a bit more?

- There isn't a right answer to this but try to ask as constructively and politely as possible and when your supervisor isn't too busy e.g. "I've noticed you feed and check the calves every morning – would I be able to help you with that tomorrow?"
- If it is a task that is one of your learning objectives, or something you feel you particularly need to practice, do ask



"It's good to ask if you want to do a bit more. People get into a routine and can just simply forget to ask the student to help"

Quote from a placement provider.

FAQs

3. What should I do if I am not happy in my placement?

- Before you start your placement, make sure you **know who to contact** at your university for any problems or support
- Think about exactly **why you are unhappy**
 - If you are staying away from home, are you simply homesick? Are you just really tired and not used to the work?
- **It is best to try and talk to someone about it**
 - Consider whether it is appropriate to talk to the placement provider – they may be able to explain the situation and/or help
 - If it is not appropriate to talk to them, or it has not resolved the problem, call your university contact
- You may be having a bad day but remember **tomorrow is another day**



“I was feeling a bit disheartened on my lambing placement – the other student seemed to be much better and more confident than me. When I mentioned it to her, I found out she was from a farming background and hadn’t realised I was struggling. After that she was happy to help and I was much happier”

Quote from a student.

FAQs



4. I'm embarrassed because I get a bit nervous around horses – I'm training to be a vet, surely I should be good at handling them already? How do I get around this on my equine placement?

- If you are nervous, choose an **appropriate placement** such as a riding school
- Do NOT be embarrassed – you are not expected to be competent at handling all animals straight away, that's what pre-clinical EMS is for!
- Do NOT try and get around this!
 - Make sure you **tell your placement** on the first day, and most will be happy to help
 - Once you're happy with the work, get stuck in!



"It's really noticeable after 2 weeks how much more confident students are around animals, from the first day to the last day"

Quote from placement provider.

FAQs

5. I already feel confident handling all animals – does this mean I don't need to do pre-clinical EMS?

- **Absolutely not** – handling animals is only one part of pre-clinical EMS, it is also about developing communication skills, learning to work with other people and understanding how businesses (and your future clients) work – which are essential skills as a vet
- If you feel that you have had a lot of experience in one area e.g. you grew up on a dairy farm, then talk to your EMS coordinator
- There will **always be something new to learn**; you can compare your various experiences
- The RCVS requires **all students** to do 12 weeks pre-clinical EMS

6. How long is a week? I've been working until 7pm every day for 7 days, including Saturday and Sunday.

- A week is 7 days, of which you may work for 5, 6 or 7 days and 7, 8 or 10+ hours
 - You will need to work as long as your supervisor requires you to work
 - If they work from 7am-7pm, 7 days a week, expect that you may too; appreciate that staff may do this every day

FAQs

7. What do I do if I think I've seen a welfare case or something that makes me feel uncomfortable?

This is difficult to answer, but here are some tips:

- It may not be as serious as you think
- Generally it is NOT acceptable to criticise the work you see at your placement
- If you think something really serious has happened, then talk to your EMS coordinator – either call them while you are still on placement or wait until you are back at uni
- Remember you may not have seen the whole picture – did you really see everything that happened from the very start and know the background? It might not be as obviously 'wrong' as it first seems



"I walked in on my first day at a kennels to see the staff using a dog pole to restrain a dog and the dog was barking and trying to get away. I later found out the dog had already bitten one person and was totally uncontrollable – they didn't have any choice in the way they were restraining him"

Quote from a student.

FAQs

Student tip: “Think about ways to minimise the cost incurred by you – it is sometimes possible to choose somewhere nearby to decrease mileage costs and always take a packed lunch”

8. I thought I would be able to earn money in the holidays and now I'm not going to have time. How do I choose a placement that will definitely pay me?

- Unfortunately **you can't**. A small number of placements might pay students, but you definitely can't expect it – you're there to learn
 - Remember it takes time for them to teach you and time costs money
- If you enjoy a placement let them know that if they ever need help you would be happy to work for them
 - This should be in addition to EMS – it may not provide you with the balance of livestock and experiences you need
- Talk to your university if you are really struggling financially – they may have an access fund for students in your position



“If we had to pay students we would expect much more from them – we'd just get someone with experience”

Quote from a placement provider.

Useful Info, Notes & Certificate

If you cannot use audio, the text is:

Congratulations, you have now finished the Animal Management & Husbandry Online Placement Tool! On the following page you will find some useful links to websites which you might find helpful. If you have completed every section you will see a green tick next to every section name and you can now claim your open badge certificate, as well as print or save a PDF file of these slides for your notes. So good luck with your placements – and enjoy them!

Useful Info

- [EMS Legal Regulations \(http://www.ems.vet.ed.ac.uk/animalmh/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/08/EMS_regulations_for_students-legal_position.pdf\)](http://www.ems.vet.ed.ac.uk/animalmh/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/08/EMS_regulations_for_students-legal_position.pdf) (guidance from RCVS)
- [RCVS Guidelines for EMS \(http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/extra-mural-studies-ems/\)](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/extra-mural-studies-ems/)
- [BVA Guidelines for EMS \(http://www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Students/\)](http://www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Students/) (NB. only accessible to BVA members)
- [RCVS Code of Professional Conduct \(http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/\)](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/)
- Please contact the EMS coordinator at your school for advice about insurance
- If outside the UK, search your equivalent websites
- Recommended reading e.g.
Management and Welfare of Farm Animals: The UFAW Farm Handbook, John Webster, 2009, Blackwell Publishing Ltd; 5th Revised Edition.
This book covers a large variety of farmed species and management systems

The Animal Management and Husbandry Online Placement Tool



A program to help veterinary students prepare for, and get the most out of, EMS placements

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Certificate

You did not provide a Mozilla Backpack email username, so no certificate will be awarded.

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