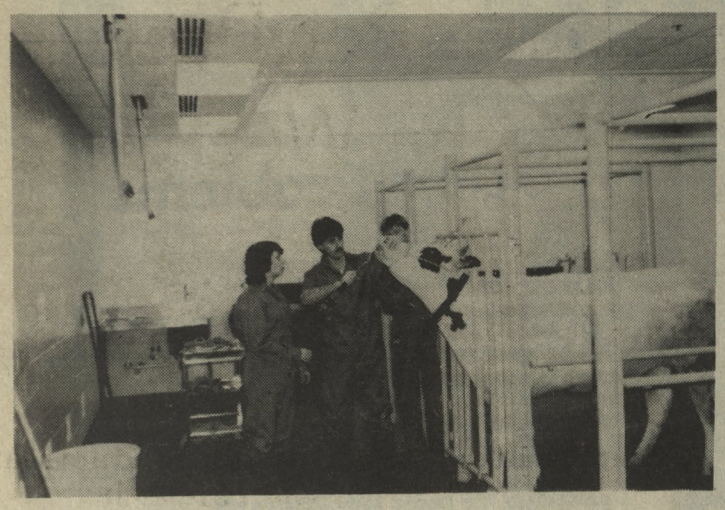
VETERINARY MEDICINE



BY: Wendy R. Carpenter

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at UPEI (The Atlantic Veterinary College) is one of the four veterinary colleges in Canada, and one of thirty–one in North America. It now has three classes of students in the four year program and will have its first graduates in 1990. Who are these students and how can you join them at the Atlantic Veterinary College?

"Each year the procedure for selecting the new AVC class involves hundreds of hours of work by the Registrar's office and our committee, which includes answering queries on the entry requirements, tallying the applicant marks of thirty one–semester courses, the hours of interviewing, and follow–up." —(Dr. Amreek Singh, Chair, DVM Admissions Committee).

Each class has fifty–two seats available. Forty–one of these are reserved for students from the Atlantic provinces in the following breakdown: NB –13, NS – 16, NFLD – 2 and PEI –10. The other seats are filled by Canadian (Non-Atlantic) students (1 or 2) and International students (9). Many people ask what it means to be a resident of a province. For many people ask us who have lived most of our lives in the Atlantic Region that is not a question since we cannot lose out residency even if we have been out of the region for several years of studying. However, those who are new to the region must have lived here for at least one year commencing on Sept 1 of the year prior to the academic year for which they are applying and must not have been a full–time student during this period.

There are thirty prerequisite courses which must be completed by every applicant, whether a mature student or not. They include: Genetics, Microbiology, Comparative Anatomy, Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physics, Biophysics, Calculus, Statistics, Computer Science, English, Humanities, and Social Sciences. These can be obtained at any university. No preference is put upon students from wither UPEI of NSAC. Students from other veterinary colleges are eligible for transfer. However, they must fulfil exactly the same requirements as other applicants. Some transfers have already occured into AVC. As well, some students have transferred to institutions in the United States, for example, Colorado State University (Fort Collins, Colorado), Cornell University (Ithaca, New York), Purdue University (West Lafayette, Indiana) and Tufts University (Boston, Massachusetts). Seventy percent of the emphasis in the application process in placed on academic marks in the required courses listed above.

While a degree is not required to enter the program, many of the students have at least one degree in the following breakdown:

Bachelor's: 65%

Master's: 6%

Doctorate: 1%

There is also a category of applicants called Advanced Standing Candidates. This is for students which have obtained a DVM outside or North America but their degree is not recognized here in Canada. There are two students at AVC in this category. In this situation, an oral examination of the candidate is conducted to decide on the level in which the applicant should be placed. This is done by a board selected by the DVM Admissions Committee. All applicants do not succeed, however. For example, for this year, only one out of four candidates was chosen.

Students are prepared for veterinary studies not only through their academic achievements but also through experience with animals and with veterinarians. Before beginning the program, students are required to have 400 hours of farm experience and one week with either a large or small animal veterinarian (the other week to be completed before their third year.) It is preferred that the farm experience be obtained by working on a food animal farm (such as dairy, beef, swine, etc.) but experience with the aquaculture operation, wildlife farm or zoo is also satisfactory.

It is an expensive program with fees being greater for those outside of Canada then within Canada. The following estimates have been made by talking to the students rather than official sources:

Canadian Student (On Campus)

Tuition: 2049

Supplies: 800–1000 (Microscope – 1250 range)

Living expenses: 4500

Canadian Student (Off Campus)

Tuition: 2049

Supplies: 800–1000 (Microscope – 1250 range)

Living expenses: 4800–5000

International Student:

Tuition: 27500

Supplies: 800–1000 (Microscope – 1250 range)

Living expenses: 4800–5000

There are several scholarships available and there are listed in the UPEI Calendar. The number is increasing each year as the institution grows.

The application procedure and deadlines are listed in the calendar. The application process includes two essays which must be written to clarify the student's aspirations for veterinary medicine as well as his or her experiences with animals. These essays are read anonymously by the Admissions Committee members and graded as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

One of the most asked questions is: "What is the interview like?" A preliminary selection is made from the total applicants to determine who is qualified to get an invitation for an interview. There students have an interview with three people representing the cross–section of the various disciplines of Veterinary Medicine. One of these interviews is the Chairman of Admissions who sits on every interview panel. Thirty percent of the applicants evaluation is based on the interview. Of this thirty, ten percent represents animal experience. The remaining twenty percent involves non–academic factors. "We are looking for students who are motivated, mature, and responsible, who communicate effectively, who can acquire analytical skills, and who can develop values essential for the members of the profession. We look for applicants" interpersonal skills, and their experience with and concern for the animals." (Dr. Singh)

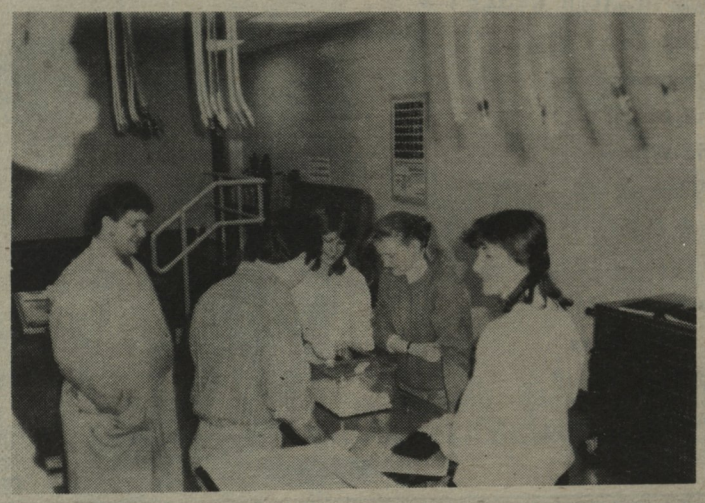
While here for the interview, AVC students volunteer their time to give personal guided tours to the applicants. Coffee, tea, doughnuts, and cookies are also provided by AVC. These tend to be consumed by the students if the applicants are not bold enough to eat them.

Since the interview is often the most remembered part of the interview process, several first–year students were asked the following questions:

Was it what you expected?

"I didn't really know what to expect. They made me feel very comfortable." (Ann Allain)

"Generally. I had talked to a few people before. I did expect more questions on my work experience. Most of my questions were more general questions." (Eoin MacInnis)



"No, I expected them to want you to be more specific in terms of your animal knowledge. I wan't really expecting broader–based questions." (Larry MacEachern)

"Yes, I was fairly well prepared. They asked a lot of questions that pertained to veterinary medicine. They wanted to establish my background and I think they did." (Gordon Vessey)

How did you feel during the interview?

"Felt like they were trying to put me at ease." (Karen Cullen)

"Nervous but not intimidated." (Don Slaunwhaite)

"Like every other vet student, extremely nervous." ('A Newfie')

"Pretty comfortable." (Jeff McCartney)

What do you remember most?

"Dr. Singh. He was very friendly." (Dave Hamilton)

"Dr. Singh wanting me to eat a doughnut." (Ann Allain)

'An overall feeling that it went well." (Robert Kerr)

"The doughnuts and the questions I didn't answer the way I wanted to." (Anne Irving)

"The fact that the interviewers did the best they could to put you at ease and they expressed a lot if interest in you and also that they were quite willing to address any of your concerns." (Larry MacEachern)

Following all of this, anxious students sit on the edge of their seats waiting to hear if they are accepted. Final word is not given until mid–July. This is because many people take summer semester courses and these marks are not received until early July. Most of the work of the Admissions Committee is really completed by May. If information is required earlier or if nothing has been received by mid–July, the student can contact the Registrar's Office at 566–0608.

Hopefully this article has been both informative and interesting. If you have been wondering what is required to enter the veterinary program, it may seem like a lot of work but it is worth the effort! Said differently, "Let us remember that the quality of the students is fundamental both to the university and to the profession. Based on what has been demonstrated by our students thus far, I have an excited feeling and great expectations of their contributions to veterinary medicine down the road." (Dr. Singh)