

Your future in STEM: A-Z

Where might **science** take you?



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Please can you introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your job?

I'm Tasha and I'm a small animal veterinary surgeon based in North Yorkshire. I qualified 5 years ago and have worked at the same practice ever since. 2 years ago, I became Clinical Director of the practice I am based at so now I run the management side of the practice too.

Could describe your usual day?

My usual day is extremely varied! One of the reasons that I love veterinary medicine is because you never know what will walk through the door. No two days are ever the same.

I spend a lot of time consulting as well as operating on animals and dealing with emergency cases. Consults can be anything from a vaccination, to poorly pets which need blood tests

and further work ups. When operating, we do a lot of different surgeries – one moment you can be removing a damaged eye and the next you could be delivering a litter of puppies via caesarean section.

How did you get into this line of work?

When I was 16, I decided that I might like to be a vet and did some work experience at a local out of hours emergency veterinary clinic. I really enjoyed it and decided at that point that I wanted to do this for a career.

What qualifications did you study, or what experience did you gather to enable you to become a veterinary surgeon?

In order to get into most veterinary schools in the UK, you need to study biology and chemistry at A level. These were two subjects that I had selected

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anyway as I enjoyed them. Veterinary school is five years of study at most UK universities and six years of study at Cambridge University. I went to Nottingham University, which was an amazing place to be, and I graduated in 2015.

Are there any particular science practical's, teachers or other moments in schools you fondly remember to this day?

I really enjoyed studying all the science subjects at school. In particular, I had a chemistry teacher called Mr Biddle who used to make the subject really interesting and made sure we got to do some great practical's in lessons. I think it really helps if you have a teacher who is passionate about their subject as this really engages you and allows you to get as much out of it as possible. ▶



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Were there any moments or events that inspired you and led you down this path, either as a child, a student or since entering work?

I've always loved animals and been absolutely crazy about them. As a child, all I ever wanted to do was play with my Duplo zoo and cuddly animals. Even now, everything in my house is animal themed from the sheep print duvet to the farm animal themed crockery – even my wedding next year will be animal themed!

Were there any people who have inspired you into this line of work?

So many! Whilst I was still training to become a veterinary surgeon, I was lucky to practice with some amazing vets and they have inspired me both in terms of veterinary medicine and surgery as well as in veterinary business. When training, I worked with two fantastic vets called Becca and Sarah who constantly inspired me with passion and enthusiasm for their cases. They now both own their own practices too – they're strong, independent



businesswomen as well as great vets.

How has your line of work changed to when you first started as a veterinary surgeon to now?

There will always be technology advancements and advancements in medicine and surgical treatment, so it's important to keep learning even after qualifying so you can offer the best possible treatments to pets. Since I qualified, there are now more women than ever in the veterinary sector, which I think is fantastic.

How has studying Science at school prepared you to be become a successful veterinary surgeon?

It gave me the passion for my career path, and I enjoy continuously learning and gaining new knowledge around my subject. It would be impossible to qualify as a vet without taking science subjects for GCSE and A Levels.

Were there any obstacles or factors that put you off this route at any point?

I had a biology teacher at school who was also Deputy Head of Sixth Form that was fairly negative about my chances of getting into veterinary school as my school had never had a student manage it before. In all honesty, I'm pleased that he casted doubts on my ability to get in as I set out prove him wrong and managed it!

What advice would you give to someone thinking about going into the same line of work as you?

If you're passionate about it – go for it! The days can be long, and the work can be hard but it's all worth it when you make sick pets better. Of course, you need to enter this profession with an awareness that it isn't always possible to make them all better – the way I deal with this is by knowing that I have tried my best for every patient that walks through the door. The veterinary sector can be an industry with unsociable hours and emotional challenges, so for that reason it isn't for everyone. ►





What advice would you give to others thinking about a career in STEM?

Studying STEM subjects can open the door to so many different career paths. Any subject that involves science can be extremely interesting and varied. I enjoy the challenges that my STEM career offers on a daily basis and it's a sector that

is always advancing so there's always the possibility to learn new things and take part in research.

What is the reaction from friends and family when you shared your desire to become a vet?

Very positive – my friends and family have supported me all

the way through training and working and understand that this is a vocation for me rather than just a job.



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