

Hello Fresher Vets!

First and foremost, massive congratulations for securing a place to study the best subject at the best college!

My name is Claudia and I'm a third year vet at Pembroke. I'm also Academics Officer for the College's Medical and Veterinary Society, so will hopefully be organising some interesting talks for you as well as ensuring you have access to any helpful resources. The purpose of this letter is to give you an overview of vet life and answer a few questions you may have.

I guess I should probably begin with the academic side of things. Within each year at Pembroke there are generally 8 medics and 2 vets. You may be wondering why I have mentioned the medics, but during the first couple of years you share around 2/3 of your lectures and practicals with them. It is therefore quite a sensible idea to build up a good relationship with the medics as well as the vets so you have people to share resources with and help you if you're struggling.

This coming year you will have three major subjects:

- **Molecules in Medical Science (MIMS)**- otherwise known as biochemistry, with a bit of genetics thrown in. It involves three lectures a week and a termly practical which lasts an entire day.
- **Homeostasis (HOM)**- also known as physiology. As with MIMS, it involves three lectures a week, but also includes a two hour practical which alternates between histology and physiology. You will share your lectures and practicals for both HOM and MIMS with the medics.
- **Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology (VAP)**- the only subject which does what it says on the tin. It consists of three lectures and two dissections a week. Although VAP is mostly focused on the dog, by the end of the year you should have a good understanding of the basic anatomy of all the domestic species (cat, horse, cow, sheep and pig).

You will also have two smaller subjects which are examined at the end of Lent (second) term:

- **Principles of Animal Management (PAM)**- essentially an introduction to animal husbandry and behaviour. Each week there are two lectures and a two hour practical, which basically just involves cuddling animals.
- **Introduction to the Scientific Basis of Medicine (ISBM)**- involves statistics and epidemiology. There is one lecture a week for ISBM.

Unfortunately most of your days will begin at 9am, but as Pembroke is opposite the lecture theatres it only takes you a maximum of 2 minutes to amble across from your room... The vets at Girton will be most jealous of your short stroll compared to their 20 minute cycle! Lectures and practicals are mostly finished by 4pm, but you will have supervisions in the late afternoon/evening. You get weekly supervisions for MIMS, HOM and VAP as well as a couple for ISBM and PAM just before the exams. Supervisions are daunting at first, but I can't tell you how useful they are, especially Angie and her amazing diagrams for VAP! Your supervisors will tend to set work each week, which often alternates between multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. You will also have lab reports to write for HOM and MIMS practicals, but they don't take very much time. Please don't worry about the amount of work you will be set- it is manageable and everything somehow seems to get done even in the most hectic weeks.

Now, although work is important, so is having a social life. As Veterinary Medicine is one of the smaller subjects with around 70 people per year, it is very easy to get to know vets at other colleges, allowing you to have a group of subject friends as well as college friends. Vets tend to be pretty sociable people as can be seen by my vet year, who all go on a big group night out a couple of times a term. Dancing the night away in Cindies with your vet friends is not only great fun, but also means you can all empathise with each other's slightly sore heads in your 9am lecture the next day. To help your year bond you get your own exclusive freshers week in addition to the college one, which involves a pub crawl, sports day and the Cherry Party. Once the fun of freshers week is over, Cambridge University Veterinary Society (CUVS) continues to organise vet events such as weekly talks with pizza, the CUVS Dinner Dance, sporting competitions and the AVS sports weekend which involves vets from all the other universities. There are a few more specific veterinary societies, such as CFAVS (farm animals), CUVZS (exotics) and CEVS (equine), who organise other talks and practicals. Within college we have our own Medical and Veterinary Society (PCMVS), which provides a couple of talks a term and the infamous MedVet Dinner. We're hoping to organise a few more social events for the society this



year, so get excited! The Pembroke vets are all extremely friendly and we try to get together as group each term. You should get to meet most of us at the subject lunch during freshers week.

My advice:

- Do not try to learn everything. It is impossible. Make sure you understand the content, but you cannot physically memorise every single minute fact, so don't get hung up on it.
- Try to do work as soon as possible, rather than letting it all pile up.
- Spend an hour or so going over what you've learned that week before your supervision and write down any questions. This will help you get the most out of them.
- If you have time (and only if!) start to make revision notes as you go along. This means everything is in place when it comes to exam term.
- Sleep! Staying up to finish that last little bit may seem like a good idea at the time, but struggling to keep your eyes open in lectures is an awful feeling and lack of sleep is damaging for your health and productivity.
- Most importantly, make sure you set aside time for some fun! This may be in the form of societies, sport or simply hanging out with your friends but down time is so important, especially in such a full on course. Work sometimes feels like the most important thing in the world, but it's not. Your health and wellbeing is.

Veterinary Medicine is a stressful course, whichever university you go to. However, if you are feeling overwhelmed, please don't keep it to yourself. Us older Pembroke vets will all have struggled at some point or another and we're more than happy to listen to your worries and give you some tips. Our Director of Studies, Dan, is also the most lovely man and always happy to have a chat. Having been a Pembroke vet himself, he gives extremely useful advice too!

I hope you're excited and I'm really looking forward to meeting you in October. I can't tell you how much I would love to go and do first year again, so make the most of it and have the best time!

Vet love,

Claudia xx

Please feel free to email ([clw73@cam.ac.uk](mailto:clw73@cam.ac.uk)) or Facebook (Claudia Welbourn) me if you have any questions.