



Courtney Wareham SVN

Courtney Wareham is a third and final year student studying Veterinary Nursing (BSc Hons) at Middlesex University. Courtney aims to graduate in July and begin working full time at Westfield Veterinary Centre, a first opinion practice in Somerset where she has completed placement throughout the last two years. She loves getting involved in surgeries and caring for inpatients. In her spare time, Courtney enjoys running, being outdoors and spending time with her friends, boyfriend and family.

Email: courtney-wareham@outlook.com

Placement 101

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Starting a placement can be a daunting and scary time but it does not have to be. This article will contain helpful tips and tricks to help you survive your placement.

Preparing for a placement starts before you step into a practice, so be sure to be organised before day one – especially with your paperwork. Also, ensure you have eaten a substantial breakfast before coming into your placement; you do not want to be fainting in the middle of surgery!

Working in the veterinary profession generally entails long days. Be prepared to be on your feet for most of the day. Therefore, purchasing comfortable shoes that will last a long time will be good preparation for starting your placement. You can find many forums online that will help you choose the best shoe for you.

Make your mental health and wellbeing a priority. During your time on placement, it can be very easy to lose yourself in all the work so make sure you are looking after yourself well.

The most important tip I can pass on to you is to always have a large supply of pens! Rarely will you find a vet that owns a pen, so offering them one is sometimes the most helpful thing you can do. Regardless of how many pens you bring to the practice, I can assure you, you will lose them all by the end of the week. Personally, I purchased a pocket pouch which helped me to organise my pockets (Figure 1). Keeping a small

notebook in your pocket is handy for writing down important information you need to remember. I also use my notebook for writing down information that I will later use to log practical skills (yes, I know my notebook is severely battered).

Even when it appears there is nothing happening there is always something to do. Your time in practice will involve a LOT of cleaning; as will your future veterinary nursing career so it's best to just get used to it. There is always something that needs cleaning or tidying. If you have exhausted all of your cleaning options, then ask if there is something you can do or help with. This will always be greatly appreciated. Personally, in my practice, I have helped to create a list of activities that need to be done each day to help students and new members of staff to understand what jobs are useful for them to be doing each day (Table 1).

Placement is all about helping you learn. If you don't understand something, just ask. It's the best way to learn! No question is ever silly or stupid. The chances are if you don't understand there is also someone else who doesn't too. Keep asking why and do not accept "this is the way we've always done it" for an answer. If you do receive this answer, research the topic and help the practice improve their protocols. However, on busy days it is best to make a note of your questions and ask during an appropriate break. Additionally, make sure you ask your questions in a polite manner; asking your colleagues 200 questions a day can sometimes sound like you're doubting them. On days that are not as busy (never use the Q word) use this time to read some literature. Remember you are there to learn, so make sure you are provided with enough time to do this.

Associate yourself with the kettle! This may seem trivial but on a busy day when you haven't had five minutes to sit down, a nice hot cup of tea will just about solve all of your problems. Making a round of teas will guarantee you a room full of smiles (Figure 2). If you are fortunate enough to be gifted with baking skills, the odd cake or batch of biscuits will definitely win you some brownie points.

Whilst on placement you will be required to log your experience and progression. This can seem terrifying and overwhelming

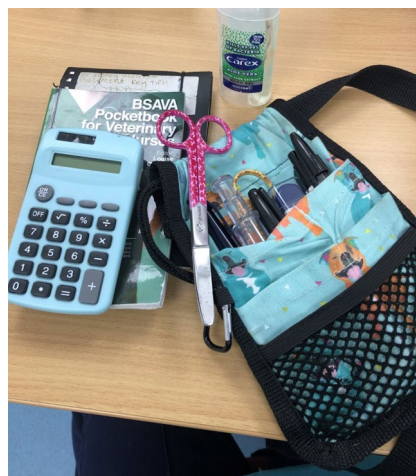


Figure 1. Pocket pouch to keep you organised.

Table 1. The list of jobs that need to be completed each day/as required within each area of the practice.

Daily jobs list		
Kennels and cattery	Prep room	Consulting rooms
Check and stock up food	Stock up IV catheters	Stock up syringes and needles
Check and order pet shirts	Top up isoflurane	Stock up vaccines
Wash bowls and cutlery	Make up flush	Booster room – top up flea and worm treatments in cupboard
Clean kennels/pods as per cleaning protocol	Deep clean theatre once a week	Clean all surfaces between each client
Thoroughly clean sinks once weekly	Washing and drying (keep up during the day)	Booster room - take payment and record
Empty bins	Cleaning kits	Auroscope/otoscope – keep ear ends clean and make sure they are on charge
Book inpatients	Make sure there is sterilised swabs	Tidy for the next day
Put up medication for inpatients/ops	Packs of cotton buds	
Going home forms for ops	Packets of needles	
Hoover and mop floors	Set up for the next day's procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ops list • Consent forms • Trays 	
Empty bins	Hoover and mop floors	
	Empty bins	



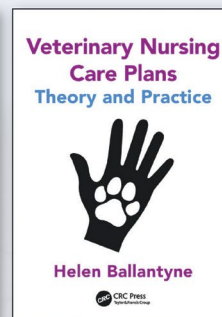
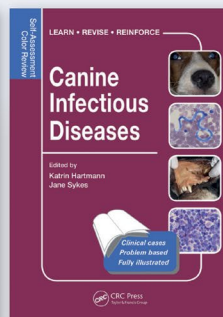
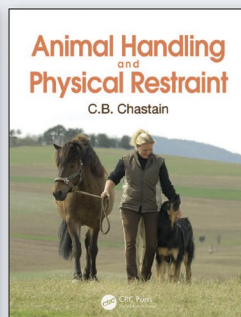
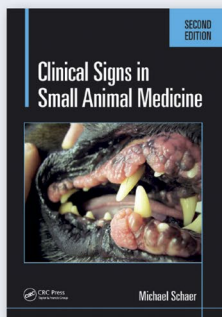
Figure 2. A cup of tea makes a big difference.

at first glance. Honestly, it's not as bad as it seems. The best tip for NPL or equivalent log of experience and progression, is to sit down and understand what each of the skills really mean and what other skills they link to. By linking skills from different sections, you will be able to log skills more efficiently and will also save yourself a lot of time.

The most important thing is to have fun and be yourself. You will spend many hours in practice so enjoying your time there will give you the best experience possible. I know it certainly did for me!

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