Hi Fresher Vets!

Congratulations on your offer to study Veterinary Medicine - you’ve picked a fantastic subject and you’ve got a great year ahead of you! I’m Emma, I’m a third year vet student here at Downing. I’m writing this letter to let you know a little more about what your first year as a vet student will be like.

In 1st year you cover 3 larger topic and 2 smaller ones. They all have fairly silly names but you’ll pick up what they mean pretty quickly!

- **MIMS (Molecules of Medical Science)** is biochemistry - involves 3 lectures a week and one practical per term and is studied alongside the medics.
- **HOM (Homeostasis)** is physiology - involves 3 lectures and 1 practical each week. Also shared with the medics.
- **VAP (Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology)** is anatomy and covers dogs, cats, horses, cows, sheep and pigs. Also 3 lectures a week as well as 2 dissection practicals. Dissections are fun and really useful so make the most of them! You’re given a dissection table with 4-5 vet students which stays the same for your first 2 years so it’s a really nice way to get to know some other vets!
- **PAM (Principles of Animal Management)** is a smaller course with 1-2 lectures a week and weekly animal handling sessions. These sessions are really nice as real animals are not that common in the centre of Cambridge!
- **ISBM (Introduction to the Scientific Basics of Medicine)** is a short course on basic statistics and epidemiology. It’s the smallest course with one lecture a week and you’ll learn most of it in supervisions.

In first year the day nearly always starts at 9am. But at Downing you live about as close to most your lectures and practicals as you could manage without sleeping in the lecture theatre. So the early starts aren’t quite as bad! You’re timetable is pretty full but you still have plenty of free time to do non-vet related things. It’s so important to do stuff other than work and there are so many opportunities to do so many different things so make the most of it!

Each week you get a supervision in each of your main subjects and these are so helpful so don’t be scared to ask questions. Usually you’ll get a total of 1-2 essays each week from supervisions and these can seem daunting at first but they are a really good way to learn the material. I think one of the hardest things about studying here is accepting that you won’t be able to learn everything you are taught - there’s simply too much (it’s very different to school in this regard). But if you do your best to keep on top of lecture content and supervision work without leaving it all to the last minute or the weekend then you’ll be absolutely fine!

You’ll have EMS placements during your holidays which will make you far more confident in handling all the main species of animal you might see as a vet. These are hard work but a lot of fun! Plus your holidays, especially over summer, are so long that the placements really aren’t difficult to fit in.

There are only about 70 vets in each year (2-3 of which are at Downing) so you get to know everyone in the year pretty quickly. It’s a very sociable subject with a lot of vet socials throughout the year including your own vet freshers week, a vet dinner dance and the AVS Sports Weekend where you can meet vet student from all the other British vet schools. I’m sure you’ll do plenty as a year group as well! The vet school also put on loads of talks throughout the year on so many different topics. These can be really nice to go to and can make up for some of the more medic orientated lecture material!

That’s about all I can think to tell you. I know it all sounds a bit scary but everyone feels the same way and when you get here you’ll have such a good time!

Looking forward to meeting you in October!

Emma