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VETERINARY NURSE/
RURAL ANIMAL TECHNICIAN

20

WORKING WITH ANIMALS

LOTS OF VARIETY

writer **SARA CARBERY** // photographer **ELANA BAI**

LEXIE ALLAN didn't set out to become a vet nurse when she left school at the beginning of Year 13, but today she's happily employed as a veterinary nurse/rural animal technician at VetCo Kennington, near Invercargill.

Having grown up riding horses, Lexie initially enrolled in the Sporthorse Stable Assistant course at SIT | Te Pūkenga's Telford campus, with the intention of heading overseas to work at a stud. When the programme didn't run in 2021, due to a shortage of enrolments, she transferred to the Rural Animal Technician course which trains students to assist veterinarians in areas such as herd/flock testing, reproduction, lab analysis and large animal health.

"I absolutely loved it," says Lexie (21). "The large equine focus was definitely a drawback, but I was surprised at how much I enjoyed working with other livestock."

Lexie was awarded the Clutha Vets Trophy for best all-round student at Telford and was inspired to study veterinary nursing at SIT | Te Pūkenga's Invercargill campus.

"Veterinary nursing was the natural choice, with surgery and anaesthesia being something that caught my interest from the get-go," she says. "I knew I loved large animal work, but I wanted to be useful to a vet clinic in more than just one way, and variety in work has always been important to me."

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LEXIE ALLAN

During the first year of her veterinary nursing studies, Lexie received an SIT | Te Pūkenga Fletcher Challenge Award. "There's no doubt that I worked hard in my studies that year," she says, "but I think I can credit my involvement in other projects within SIT, including being on the Vet Nursing Advisory Committee and my role as class representative."

A typical day at VetCo might see her in the clinic administering medications, monitoring anaesthesia for surgical cases, carrying out nurse consults such as injections and nail clips, admitting and discharging patients, and undertaking lab work.

As a rural animal technician, Lexie also visits farms to carry out seasonal work such as teat sealing, blood collection and microchipping foals for Harness Racing New Zealand.

"I thoroughly enjoy the variety in my work," she says. "No two days are the same."

Lexie particularly likes caring for emergency and intensive care patients and hopes one day to specialise in this area.

She admits it's an emotionally strenuous job, with lots of highs and lows, so it's important to work in a strong and closeknit team.

Lexie grew up in Queenstown and attended Wakatipu High School before moving to Auckland half-way through Year 12.

Of the subjects she took in Year 12, Biology and Statistics have been the most useful, along with a theory-based Physical Education class she took in Year 11 which focused on anatomy and physiology. Chemistry would also have been useful, she says.

If you're considering veterinary nursing as a career, Lexie suggests focusing on the sciences at school and making the most of the three-day clinic experience students are required to do before entering the course.



KEY FACTS



- **LEXIE ALLAN** WORKS AS AN **VETERINARY NURSE/ RURAL ANIMAL TECHNICIAN** AT **VETCO KENNINGTON**, NEAR **INVERCARGILL**.
- SHE COMPLETED A **NZ CERTIFICATE IN ANIMAL TECHNOLOGY (RURAL ANIMAL TECHNICIAN)** AT **SIT | TE PŪKENGA'S TELFORD CAMPUS** AND A **NZ CERTIFICATE IN ANIMAL TECHNOLOGY** AND A **NZ DIPLOMA IN VETERINARY NURSING** AT **SIT | TE PŪKENGA'S INVERCARGILL CAMPUS**.
- IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING **VETERINARY NURSING** AS A CAREER, **LEXIE** SUGGESTS FOCUSING ON THE **SCIENCES** AT SCHOOL AND MAKING THE MOST OF THE **THREE-DAY CLINIC EXPERIENCE** STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO DO BEFORE ENTERING THE COURSE.



For more information on studying veterinary nursing, animal care and equine at SIT | Te Pūkenga, visit www.sit.ac.nz/Courses/Veterinary-Nursing-Animal-Care-Equine

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