

**Essay runner up****Name:** Sophia Beeley**Studying:** Veterinary Medicine, at University of Nottingham

A year ago, I embarked on what is going to be a long, difficult course, Veterinary Medicine. I've just finished my first year, and I have already been kicked by a cow, been covered in various disgusting fluids, had milk sprayed into my eye directly from the udder and pulled a number of all-nighters trying to cram in the ridiculous amount of work we have. And I love it. I love that some days of the week, we'll be crammed into lecture halls listening to endless facts, as of course no two species are the same (that would make things too easy for us). Then other days, we will dress in extremely unflattering boiler suits and run around a field trying to catch sheep. And although at the time it seems to me that I will never remember enough and I'm in over my head, I suddenly realise that actually I have learnt more in one year than I could ever have imagined. There is that incredible feeling when things start to piece together, when I actually think yes, I do know this and actually yes I can do this.

I love my course as not many other students have sessions on how to catch a chicken, or have to pass an exam on tipping a cow on its back. I especially enjoy placements where even if I'm sat in a shed, freezing cold and soaking wet, I could have a new-born lamb in my hands and (at the risk of sounding very cheesy) you just don't care anymore about the long hours and the discomfort, all you can do is grin stupidly in amazement and you know it is all worthwhile. You get chucked in at the deep end very often and it's amazing how quickly you learn.

It has made a huge change from school, where I learnt what I had to in order to pass the year and get the grades I wanted, to actually being interested in what I am doing. I have gone from memorising endless information about subjects I never really cared about, to suddenly taking pleasure in my lectures. I am learning about a profession I myself chose, where I actually care about and am fascinated by the lessons taught. It never gets dull, my emotional state ranges from pure terror when I'm asked to do something I couldn't possibly imagine being able to do, to pride when you actually accomplish it. It has made me realise that I am going to make endless mistakes (like claiming in an exam I could hear a heartbeat when I hadn't even put the end of the stethoscope in my ears, yes I did that) but hopefully in another 4 years' time I will be let loose in the veterinary world with a slight idea of what I am doing and the willingness to get stuck in. As with all courses and especially mine, the learning never ends!