BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO

Internship Program



Animal Care Specialist Intern: Hoofed Mammals

The Hooved Mammal team, despite its name, actually cares for a diverse array of animals from Africa, Asia, and North America. As an intern, you'll have the chance to work closely with both large and small mammals, as well as various bird species including but not limited to giraffe, okapi, zebra, pangolins, bison, camels, hornbills, storks, and cranes. You'll enjoy a mix of indoor and outdoor tasks, supporting animal care specialists with daily responsibilities. This is a hands-on opportunity to dive into animal husbandry, nutrition, record keeping, training, medical care, and more. Plus, you can make a real impact by completing a research project with your mentor, aiming to enhance animal care and welfare practices.

Interns will thrive in a dynamic, team-oriented environment, learning the daily operations of an Animal Care Specialist. Each day is a new adventure packed with learning experiences. Working alongside a diverse team of seasoned specialists, you'll engage in preparing diets for our animal collection, thorough cleaning of animal enclosures and maintenance tasks in public and non-public areas, educating and engaging with visitors, collaborating with your mentor on a personal project, distributing species-specific environmental enrichment, collecting husbandry data and maintaining records, seasonal delivery of browse throughout the zoo, discovering the natural history of species in our care, conducting behavioral observations, and handling animals based on your skill level, with close supervision.

Successful interns exhibit a positive attitude, strong work ethic, eagerness to learn, and teamwork skills. The internship requires a five-day work week with various shifts (7:00-3:30, 8:00-4:30, and 10:00-6:30) and may include weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Physical demands include standing, kneeling, lifting up to 50 lbs, handling insects, entering spaces with large mammals, and adapting to various weather conditions. Please communicate any scheduling needs during the interview. Join us for an exciting learning journey.

AT A GLANCE

PAY RATE: Unpaid
HOURS/WEEK: Full Time (35+ hours/week)
COMMITMENT: 10-12 weeks
LOCATION: Onsite at Brookfield Zoo Chicago
PREREQUISITE: At least 1 year of college credit & experience
COLLEGE CREDIT: Available upon request






Position Details: Ungulates

Physical Requirements

Animal Care Specialist positions are physically demanding, and interns may be subjected to a variety of physical demands and environmental factors and exposures. Candidates must have the ability to perform essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations, such as:

- Ability to stand, walk, kneel, or squat for extended periods.
- Ability to lift up to 50 pounds regularly
- Comfort climbing ladders
- Comfort working outdoors in varying and extreme weather conditions, including inclement weather, extreme heat, and cold temperatures.

All interns, regardless of proximity to animals, must have an up to date TDAP (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis) vaccination (booster within the last 10 years) and test negative for TB (Tuberculosis) within the last 12 months.

Scheduling Expectations

Brookfield Zoo Chicago operates 365 days a year. Schedules vary by position, but may include weekends, holidays, early mornings, and evenings. Successful interns exemplify a positive attitude, strong work ethic, an eagerness to learn, and an ability to work effectively both in a team and independently. Given the competitive landscape of professional animal care, candidates should be mindful of the following scheduling requirements:

- Must be willing to commit to 10-12 weeks in a term, not to exceed 480 total hours.
- Availability is required for the full internship term, including weekdays, weekends, holidays, early mornings, and evenings.
- Schedules may change based on animal and departmental needs, with advance notice provided whenever possible.

Preferred Qualifications

- Preference is given to those who have completed at least 2 years of college.
- Multilingual ability, Spanish fluency a plus.