



Internship Program



Animal Care Specialist Intern: Small Mammals

This internship contributes to the success of Brookfield Zoo Chicago by supporting the daily care and welfare of small mammal species housed in Desert's Edge and the Clouded Leopard Rainforest. This hands-on learning experience is designed for individuals interested in pursuing careers in animal care, zoology, biology, conservation, or related fields.

Interns work alongside Animal Care Specialists to assist with daily husbandry tasks, habitat maintenance, diet preparation, behavioral observation, and enrichment activities for a variety of small mammal species. Species may include, but are not limited to, meerkats, naked mole rats, bat-eared foxes, binturongs, and other small mammals. Interns gain exposure to animal husbandry, record keeping, and collaboration with animal health and welfare staff, while developing a strong foundation in professional animal care practices.

In addition to daily animal care responsibilities, interns complete a supervised project—such as an enrichment, research, or observational study—based on departmental needs and individual interests. Interns work in a fast-paced, team-oriented environment and are expected to demonstrate professionalism, adaptability, and a strong commitment to animal welfare.

This internship provides a well-rounded introduction to small mammal care in a modern zoological setting and helps prepare participants for future careers in animal care and conservation.

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: Small Mammals

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 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.
- Any anticipated scheduling conflicts should be disclosed during the interview process.

Preferred Qualifications

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