



Animal Care Specialist Intern: Marine Mammals

This internship contributes to the success of Brookfield Zoo Chicago by supporting exceptional marine mammal care while training future professionals in the field of marine mammal husbandry and training. Interns gain hands-on, career-focused experience working alongside animal care staff in Dolphin Bay and Sea Lion Cove, home to common bottlenose dolphins, California sea lions, and gray seals.

The Marine Mammals internship is designed for individuals pursuing careers in marine mammal care. Interns support daily operations while gaining exposure to animal husbandry, training, enrichment, and guest engagement. Learning occurs through a combination of mentor-led instruction, independent study, and supervised hands-on experience, with responsibilities increasing based on individual progress and demonstrated competency.

Interns in animal care perform essential tasks such as preparing food for pinnipeds, maintaining and exceeding USDA, AZA, AMMPA, and IMATA standards, and cleaning areas. They engage with zoo guests, promote conservation, and ensure safety during dolphin presentations. Responsibilities include educating visitors about Brookfield Zoo Chicago, evaluating enrichment devices, and completing projects. Interns also prepare educational presentations, enter husbandry data, assist staff, and engage in hands-on animal work under supervision. A typical day includes food preparation, cleaning, independent reading, mentorship, and observing care and training, with readiness for additional tasks as needed.

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AT A GLANCE

PAY RATE: Unpaid

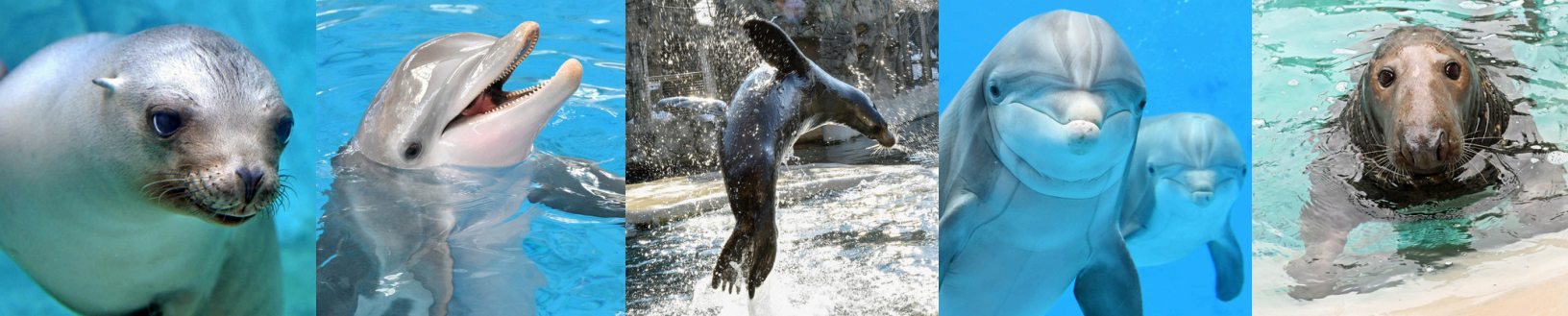
HOURS/WEEK: Full Time (35+ hours/week)

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: Marine 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
- Ability to swim and work safely around deep water
- 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.

Interns are fully integrated into the daily operations of Dolphin Bay and Sea Lion Cove. Time is generally allocated as follows:

- 40% departmental tasks like cleaning, maintenance, animal observations, enrichment support
- 15% educational meetings, readings, training discussions, and individual project research
- 25% guest engagement, including guest interactions and assisting with daily presentations
- 15% observing training sessions and assisting with animal husbandry

Preferred Qualifications

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