

# SPOTLIGHT ON Cornell Veterinary Medicine

Innovative approaches in teaching the next generation of veterinarians.

## Advancing hands-on clinical learning at Cornell

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Cornell's approach to clinical training begins from the moment students arrive. In the first 2 years of the program, problem-based learning (PBL) plays a central role in student education. Clinical cases serve as a vehicle for students to acquire knowledge in subjects such as anatomy, physiology, and microbiology, helping them connect the biomedical sciences to clinical patient care. PBL also affords students early opportunities to begin to foster clinical problem-solving skills. Numerous employment opportunities in animal facilities, teaching hospitals, and laboratories provide an additional avenue for applied learning.

As students progress through the curriculum, clinical reasoning skills are formally integrated into clinical courses, with a variety of exercises designed to help students efficiently generate accurate problem lists and differential diagnoses. In the spring of their third year, students transition onto clinical rotations where a high-volume caseload and one-on-one clinician feedback allow students to build their clinical knowledge base and refine their clinical reasoning skills.

Cornell's clinical curriculum is also recognized for its high degree of flexibility, allowing students to customize their education through enrollment in elective courses—which comprise approximately 30% of the curriculum—and the selection of clinical pathways based on students' species and practice-type interests.

The proximity to rural regions allows students to work with a wide variety of animal species within the curriculum, as well as through extracurricular clubs and student employment opportunities. Cornell's Teaching Dairy hosts 200 cows in a free-stall barn and milking parlor, an observation area, and a 40-person classroom. The Teaching Dairy gives students a firsthand look at herd health management and effective bovine care—from the individual cow to the industry—equipping them with valuable experience to serve dairy herds they help in the future. Moreover, the Cornell Equine Park encompasses 165 acres of green pastures, a 62-stall main barn, and barns for the stallions and broodmares. Here, students not only learn the management of a top-of-the-

line boarding and breeding facility for client-owned horses, but also get hands-on lessons with Cornell-owned equines, learning to handle and examine horses, as well as practice ultrasounds, inseminations, and other key clinical skills necessary for equine practitioners.

Similarly, the Janet L. Swanson Wildlife Hospital, an annex of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals, not only provides expert medical and surgical care for over 1,500 patients annually, but is also dedicated to training veterinary students, veterinary technician students, and graduate veterinarians in wildlife medicine. Students participate in each case, learning how to provide the highest-quality medical care to these native New York animals, with the ultimate goal of releasing them back into the wild.

In 2018, we launched the Cornell Small Animal Community Practice, a standalone primary care hospital that allows students to acquire clinical experience in a state-of-the-art facility. Fourth-year students step into the role of veterinarian to perform treatments ranging from vaccinations to surgeries and dental procedures, all with guidance from experienced faculty and licensed veterinary technicians. Cornell also recognizes that the delivery of high-quality patient care requires sound business operations. The Cornell Center for Veterinary Business and Entrepreneurship (CVBE), founded in 2020, partners with the Cornell University Hospital for Animals to teach veterinary business principles and practices to students. Through courses and hospital-based projects, students explore areas such as lean inventory management, charge capture, and quality assurance under the mentorship of CVBE faculty.

At Cornell, we take pride in our long history of innovative clinical teaching, and continue to build on that legacy through incorporating new competency-based approaches to clinical education, developing new programs that wrap around more traditional medical training, and recent openings of new state-of-the-art teaching and hospital facilities that support high-quality patient care. Our integrated curriculum is intended to set up our graduates for a lifetime of professional success.

