

# Alumni Voices: The Shaping of a Future Veterinarian

By John Lucy, Class of 2008

I vividly remember my freshman move-in at Cook College back in 2004. Behind the chaotic stampede of anxious freshmen dragging overpacked boxes (with way more belongings than would ever fit in their dorm rooms) was an aroma that, at the time, seemed foreign to me. You see, my dorm was directly adjacent to the college farm, and the odor of horses, cows and pigs wafted over in the warm summer breeze. As a suburbanite who had spent the bulk of my childhood in developed Ocean County, the idea of living next to a farm seemed as bizarre as the fact that I would have to share a bathroom with about thirty strangers.

But that aroma soon brought with it a sense of being home. Within weeks of starting classes I had already taken multiple trips down to the farm for my introductory animal sciences course, and by October I had gotten the extraordinary opportunity to see one of our wonderful Standardbred mares racing to near-maximal speed on the Equine Science Center's treadmill. It was at that moment that I knew that I had to make working with these incredible animals a pillar of my academic pursuits at Rutgers.

The following spring I began conducting research with Dr. Carey Williams, the school's equine extension specialist - a task that I would continue until its culmination in a G.H. Cook Thesis during my senior year. During my time in Dr. Williams' lab I learned everything from basic equine husbandry to proper jugular catheterization, and I had numerous opportunities to meet many "bigwigs" in the New Jersey equine community. My thesis study, which focused on antioxidant supplementation and its impact on exercise-induced inflammation, was one of the greatest highlights of my undergraduate years. (The second, perhaps, was an exceptionally successful football season!)

My didactic coursework in animal science was also a huge benefit, as my classes in nutrition, reproduction, endocrinology and physiology all prepared me for the science-intensive veterinary curriculum at Cornell University. Also, my leadership roles at Rutgers, which included being president of the Veterinary Science Club and a Student Orientation Ambassador, have made me a more active member of my vet class than I ever would have been otherwise.

My love for horses, which developed and coalesced during my undergrad years, has lost no steam during vet school. Since graduating, I have explored various aspects of equine medicine and have loved them all! I spent the past two summers working on research projects; the first at Virginia Tech looking at obesity in Thoroughbreds and this past summer at Cornell working with horse stem cells under the mentorship of Dr. Alan Nixon, a renowned equine orthopaedic surgeon. I've also had the opportunity to get my hands dirty as both a large animal surgery technician and a foal "sitter."

Since graduating, I have realized how fortunate I was to have studied at Rutgers. The experiences I had and the people I met there have positively shaped my life, nurturing both my academic and personal needs and making me into a much better person (and, in three years, veterinarian) than I would have ever been otherwise. And for that, I will be eternally grateful.



*John Lucy treats a "patient" with tender loving care.*