

2024 Pacific Northwest Salmonid Veterinary Externship Report

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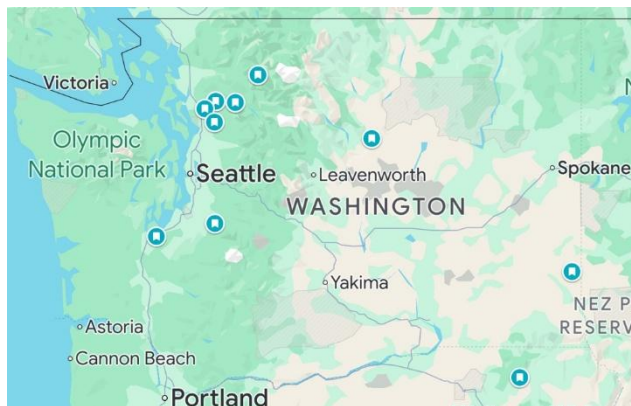
Washington State University, Class of 2025

Before receiving the honor of the AAFV Student Scholarship, my aquatics experience included a summer performing aquatic pathology research at Nippon Veterinary Life Science University in Japan, the lectures and fish surgery lab at AAFV Conference 2022, and AQUAVET I in 2023.

The experiences above and the mentors that have supported me have been especially important due to the lack of fish medicine in the curriculum at my vet school. WSU is a non-tracking school, however the general curriculum only had 2-3 PowerPoint slides total on fish medicine. Because of this, it was necessary to be active in the aquatics club and look for external fish medicine experiences on top of my required curriculum. With the AAFV Scholarship, I was able to offset the financial burden of an optional external rotation in my 4th year. I was lucky enough to be selected for the 2024 Pacific Northwest Salmonid Veterinary Externship Program (PNSVEP).

The PNSVEP is a 2-week program that aims to support the next generation of aquaculture veterinarians by exposing students to a variety of stakeholders in salmon and trout production through the Pacific Northwest. The schedules are able to be modified slightly to the students' interests and availability, and every experience provides a baseline set of knowledge for any future veterinarian to begin practicing fish medicine.

Below is a map of the locations that I participated in during my externship. There was



about 31 hours of driving between all the locations, which was extremely worth it! I began with 4 days at the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, where my mentors there went over my pre-quiz with me, helped me correct my answers, and I assisted in spawning and antibiotic administration at multiple hatcheries. My mentors were extremely interested in supporting students, and since I told them my other special interest is in cardiology, I was allowed to ultrasound

and sex the fish that were examined that day.

The most important aspect of this externship was the variety of experiences and mentors that I was able to work with. With the ability to work with so many veterinarians in different regions of the PNW in such a short period of time, I was able to learn some the nuances of their approaches to medicine and begin to understand what practices will work best for me and my learning style. From imaging to diagnostics, pathology, antibiotic stewardship, client communication with the hatchery employees, record keeping, sample collection, and critical thinking, the PNSVEP has primed me to feel comfortable asking the right questions to get a

baseline understanding of common fish disease processes. From there, I will feel more



comfortable consulting with fish vets and diagnostic labs to work up common fish cases. It's also important to note that this externship was one of the most well-planned ones I've had so far in my 4th year, and the pre- and post-quizzes truly helped me understand where my knowledge was at before and after the externship, and it felt like all of the mentors were on the same page on what was important for me to know for day 1 aquaculture competency.

While I have sadly completed this externship, the skills I developed have translated very well to my small animal rotations afterwards. I have more confidence knowing what I don't know, asking for help, and using current literature and resources in order to find answers to the problems I

see in small animal medicine. That's my favorite part about fish medicine—the field is growing at an astonishing rate thanks to the passion and research of fish veterinarians worldwide.

This externship has given me more confidence in making fish medicine a part of my future veterinary career. While I don't have solid plans on how I will incorporate aquaculture into my work yet, I know that I have a support network thanks to this externship. Thank you again to PNSVEP and AAFV for supporting my future fish career in veterinary medicine—this will be one of the highlights of my vet school experience and I will be utilizing what I've learned on this externship every day after I graduate.

