Making animals’ well-being a priority.
Animal well-being is a relatively new scientific field that combines, among others, the studies of behavior, endocrinology, immunology, and neuroscience. Animal well-being specialists plan and run experiments to determine the best environmental conditions or the best management practices for processes such as transport or weaning. They work directly with animals and also in laboratories. Some work primarily with one species, while others work across multiple species. They report what they find to other scientists at meetings, to farmers at extension meetings, or to the public through publications. They teach in public and private universities or colleges. Animal well-being specialists must be interested in both the science and the public perception surrounding the best practices for the well-being of animals. They are curious people who like to do research, accept unexpected data, and search for answers to what those data mean.

Animal well-being specialists may work for the federal government, universities, or private industries. They may work in consumer-based industries such as well-being auditing firms, fast food and restaurant organizations, or organizations interested in promoting the well-being of animals.

If you want to work with agricultural animals, study in an animal science department; to work with zoo animals, study in an animal science or biological science department; and for companion animals, study in a school of veterinary medicine. Take classes on current production practices and appropriate science courses such as neurobiology, endocrinology, immunology, physiology, animal behavior, and animal well-being. Because the ability to communicate effectively is essential, take English and communication courses. Basic math and statistics classes are also necessary. Graduate students in animal well-being take more specialized courses in their disciplines. In graduate school, students develop and conduct experiments, analyze data using statistical methods, and give written and oral presentations of results.

In high school, focus on college entry coursework in both science and liberal arts. Take biology, chemistry, math, English, and speech. Extracurricular activities and membership in organizations can help you develop and use leadership and other skills that you will use throughout your career.