

# How to survive BVSc4/5!

Disclaimer: This is a compilation of advice, tips and tricks from current 5th year vet students, there may be some conflicting responses, but remember what works for one person, may not work for another! All the best for the year ahead, look after yourself and your peers.

## What advice would you give to current 4th year students?

- If you do better with online learning, don't force yourself to go into class if you don't have to - watch that recording or live stream. But do get a schedule sorted in case there aren't pre-existing recordings and you have to wait for it to be uploaded - don't get behind too much.
- Don't panic and send yourself into a downwards spin if you fall behind (this just made me fall behind even more) - just make a realistic catchup schedule and stick to it. Obviously try and stay on top of everything, but if life gets in the way and you fall behind, it's not the end of the world (for context I've been about 4 weeks behind on lectures and still caught up, it was shit, but possible)
- Good luck :) 4th year is difficult and exhausting but try to focus on how far you have come and enjoy the fact you are learning real vet stuff now! Don't stress too much about anesthesia - the staff are really lovely and will help you! Use the clinical skills lab as much as possible - surgery will be so much easier if the only thing you have to stress about is the surgery and not the gowning, gloving and draping as well. Also go through the Desexing Clinic as much as possible - it really helps those basic skills (injections, drawing up drugs, gloving, castrating, recovering patients) become second nature which gives you more time to focus on other skills during the year.
- Keep reviewing basic third year pathology. It will make the end of year Pathology exam less terrifying.
- Fourth year is easier than previous years when it comes to content, but is a lot harder on your mental health. You have been studying for so long now, it can be extremely difficult to find motivation to keep going. You need to give yourself regular breaks, have time set aside each week to do something for you, make sure you are looking after yourself and your friends. You've got this!
- Don't be afraid to reach out for help - your lecturers, classmates and even us 5th years are always more than happy to have a chat, help explain topics in a different way, or even just reassure you that you're on the right track. You are not alone in this degree, other people are stressed, other people are struggling and there is always someone else who doesn't understand. There is no such thing as a stupid question; you were smart enough to get into vet so you are smart enough to learn these topics; if it takes you a little bit longer than your peers that's okay
- Go see the counselors before you need to. If your brain isn't making sufficient neurotransmitters, store bought is also fine (and get on them quick!). Prep your meals, or cook them and freeze them for the weekdays / roster days.
- Although there are less lectures, it is still a full on year but you will finally be able to do a lot more

practical components such as surgery and scrubbing etc. Makes you feel like a mini Vet!

- Cattle is a fat paper, I'd focus on that in first arm and Chris Compton in 2nd sem. Also once Keren appears for path pay attention cause bones is a trickier topic. But otherwise the year is a bit easier than last year as long as you don't completely slack off of course.
- More importantly, if there's a really cool OWNS you want to do for 5th year (zoo, exotics, wildlife Africa or abroad or smth - book it in 4th year; that kind of stuff books up fast)
- I enjoyed fourth year a lot more than third but let me tell you the burnout is real. There may be less time in lectures (good riddance to those 4 hour blocks) but the equine kuraclouds SUCK. Just try to keep up and don't get left behind. Not going to lie, my main motivation to get through was that 'it is your last year of lectures' and 'it would be a shame to fail this close to the end'.
- Don't take integrative Farm too seriously cause whatever you write it most likely won't be the specific thing that Chris wants you to write.

### Choosing your track and special topics

- Massey large animal stuff can be pretty slow. If you are interested in doing mixed animal work it may be better to track smallies and use your OWNs for large animal work. The tutorials at Massey are pretty good though (especially sheep and beef spring).
- Choose what you will enjoy! It really doesn't matter. You can be a smallies tracker and still be a largies vet.
- The only difference between mixed tracks of production and smallies and a single track is two little weeks. Don't agonise over it.
- Your track doesn't matter - everyone has the same core rosters and there isn't a lot of difference in the track rosters; whatever track you choose you will be set up well for final exams and will still enjoy your time in the hospital.
- Choose special topics that you are really interested in rather than what you think is 'most useful' for your future - these weeks are really fun breaks from your usual rosters.
- Book hard to get OWNS early - when filling out your track form there is space to let the undergrad office know if you have already booked owns and they will arrange the rest of your schedule around this.
- Don't stress too much about special topics - they are all pretty good and one week in the year doesn't make that big a difference in the grand scheme of things. Also if you have a particular interest i.e. lifestyle animals, dentistry or dermatology you can also organize OWNs at a clinic with a specialist or someone that is interested in that area to get some more experience.

- There is a talk on 25th May through the Massey Student Wildlife and Conservation Club on how fifth year works, and specifically how a special track works
- Do what you enjoy and are interested in - and for those of you who need a less stressful time, go full production!
- Do not stress between straight smallies and mixed (SA + PA) its like two weeks difference, but also smallies hospital is full on so if you don't handle long hours pick mixed
- Doesn't realistically matter, you can easily pivot after vet school but main advice do what you're most interested in, and if you don't want to spend that much time in smallies do mixed or production cause they really seem to be chilling much more than me (smallies tracker), but I'm loving my smallies rosters cause I only want to do smallies anyways.
- Honestly your track does not matter that much in the grand scheme of things you just need to look at the rosters and what you actually want to have practice with. (I know so many vets that tracked one thing and got a completely different job as a new grad) Have fun with your special topics and do what interests you. You don't always have to do what you think you HAVE to do.

### What to expect during fifth year

- 5th year is full on in a way that is completely different to other years. Although the academic workload is lower (you don't have to do 4 -5 hours of lectures back to back) your days are long and the work can be very challenging at times. It can also be very difficult to maintain work/ life balance when your timetable is changing every week and you may have to travel across the country. Remember to still give yourself time off on the weekends to avoid burnout!
- Don't stress out too much about what clinicians say to you or what your one feedback is. Remember that they have been doing this for years while this is the first time for many of us - things will not come as naturally to you as they will to someone who has done it every day for many years! Try really hard to back yourself and remind yourself how hard you have worked and how far you have come. You may not be a 100% competent vet yet but you have come so far from 1st year you!
- 5th year is also expensive especially if you want to do placements in the South Island - ferry costs, petrol and accommodation add up. Try to get scholarships for clinics or book near palmy if you want to save on costs. I always email clinics to see if they have accommodation before I book.
- Have an extra lab coat, 2 is enough. Don't stress about the dress code in the purple book. It's ridiculous. Wear what you are comfortable in and practical. As long as it's tidy. Polo top and black pants with black sketches is fine. But also if you want to wear nice tops go ahead. I just found them uncomfortable and impractical when working with animals.
- The hospital is not that bad! Yes sometimes the hours are long and treatments are annoying but it's

busy so the day goes really fast. If you have time over the year, organize your notes into smallies/largies/equine. Makes it way easier when you are looking for certain information.

- Feel free to come chat to any of us fifth years, we are more than happy to help. Fifth year is extremely enjoyable but it is also very draining. You are working a lot of long hours and long weeks back to back. When organising your OWNS make sure you leave weeks free for rest and recovery, you will thank yourself later.
- All of the staff at Massey are super friendly and happy to help you out. They are used to having students and teaching. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask someone to show you how to do something for the first time. You won't get in trouble, you won't look stupid, we are all learning. Help out your classmates as much as possible. The case load at times can be very high and things are done so much quicker and a lot more stress free when everyone does their part to pitch in and help.
- It's hard and stressful and so utterly rewarding. You will hate bits of it and love most of it. You will be very very tired.
- Time to pony up kid
- 5th year is chill, it's basically just going to work everyday and you getting involved in cases. They don't care if you don't know the answers as long as you don't have a shit attitude. Barely any homework, apart from a few rosters where you would prep for the next day (surgery) etc.
- 5th year can be stressful especially when you are on those big rotations like Surgery or Emergency. But remember it is not the end all. I'm enjoying being out and about so much more than just sitting at a desk. Don't be too stressed about failing rosters because you really have to try or fuck up something royally to earn yourself a fail mark.

### General Advice

- Burnout is real and if you feel it coming on - take active action to get out of it. Be that taking the day off or whatever you need to do.
- GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK. Honestly, there is not much of a break between 4th and 5th year, if you push yourself too hard it will all become so much more difficult. Give yourself the time you need to actually rest and prepare for the coming year. It's really easy to forget how much you love the degree when you are focusing so hard on surviving!
- 5th year is actually really enjoyable and the fact that you are not having to constantly study is so much nicer. You actually have your weekends. Use your down time on owns to get assignments done. Don't stress about booking all your owns at the start of the year. I booked all mine then ended up changing most of them. Sometimes you just need a week off so it's not a problem to cancel owns and rebook later. It's also not an issue to do some after exams. Make sure you take time during the year to rest.

- You are all amazing, don't forget that and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You have worked so hard to be here, you deserve to be here. Look after yourself and your friends. Reach out if you need
- Be kind to yourself, as much as you can. You are going to feel like you're on the back foot most of the year, and that's okay. Love your techs, they are the real MVPs. If you have disabilities, chronic illnesses, or neurospice, talk to your year coordinator IN ADVANCE. If you need to only do 8 hours a day, get that written into stone! Communicate it and don't let any eye rolls or constipated faces stop you from advocating for your needs!
- You're finally getting to the culmination of the degree, hopefully starting to reinforce some of the key ideas. Enjoy it only a few years left to go
- Just try to stay on top of your shit but frankly I wasn't and I still didn't fail. Focus on Chris Compton paper second sem cause that one is the most clusterfuck.
- Make sure that your whole life does not just revolve around studying. Have a social life, hang out with friends, go to a happy hour or just get outside for a walk. Enjoy your time as a student and with your class because in 5th year it is likely you won't see some of them again until grad dinner.

### Words of inspiration that helped you get through

- Inspired Unemployed or Wednesday's We Drink Wine podcasts. Easy, light and funny. Good for bus rides to and from uni!
- spotify podcast called "Questions With Crocker" by Dr Tannetje Crocker- it covers all things from vet school to being a vet to running a clinic to personal experiences.
- C's get degrees, but you'll actually be using this stuff as a future vet so keep your notes tidy as you'll most likely need them later on
- Honestly my classmates got me through. Having the camaraderie helped me push through, knowing we're all in the same boat and we all managed to do it, getting through every test and assignment and practical and exam together!
- What do you call someone who graduated at the bottom of their class in med school? A doctor. Don't stress too much about grades, you got this!
- Trying to learn surgical skills such as suturing and ligatures can be really frustrating to not get straight away but just remember how shit you were when you first started to learn how to ride a bike "Someones probably worse than you"
- I binged My Favorite Murder.

- You've been through things much harder than this, and you've made it this far, clearly you got this. One of the professors said when we started 5th year that if you make it to that point, you're basically guaranteed to get the degree so only one more stretch to go.
- 'Tough times never last, only tough people last'. YOU CAN DO IT YOU'RE ALMOST THERE.