

# Sessions for Students

Moderator: Lisa Willis

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## A Day in the Life?

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We have spoken all over the United States encouraging students to pursue a career in rural medicine. Titles of the presentations have included “Economics in the Trenches,” “Rural Medicine Myths,” “Making a Hand,” “Expectations” and more often than not, “A Day in the Life of a Rural Veterinarian.” My partners and I have wowed you with pictures of rural scenes and relaxed country life. We have spoken about the lifestyle choice of mixed animal practice and our quality of life. Our student extern program has expanded—no exploded—with enthusiastic (for the most part) students from around the country and Europe. Our clinic has taught Yankees about fire ants and Brahman cattle, small-animal students about the virtue of palpating cattle on wheat and city kids the satisfaction of helping people that make their living through agriculture. Cross Timbers Veterinary Hospital has opened their doors and practice to any visiting veterinarian or student in an effort to “sell” what we believe to be the pinnacle of veterinary practice. Yet, recently students have said, “enough!” They know we have the best life, the most challenging practice and that rural jobs are more than plentiful but they are not sure they qualify. Students are apprehensive that they won’t fit the personality of a country practice because they don’t know the cost of corn, the cost of diesel, or the latest farm bill. The thought of appearing ignorant or uninformed leaves students vapor-locked and unable to make a decision about their career. Statistics illustrate that this apprehension fuels a lack of rural practitioners. The mantra of “move to the country” leaves most veterinary students feeling they don’t qualify and that rural practices must be looking for someone else. So, at the request of our students we designed a short TRUE/FALSE test to identify those of you that qualify for rural practice. Your performance will help you determine where you belong and the questions should also fulfill the assigned topic of “A Day in the Life of a Texas Veterinarian.”

### **Rural Practice Aptitude Test (RPAT)**

1. I enjoy and expect to be isolated from colleagues and referral centers. (T / F)
2. The low-quality, “seat of the pants” medicine in mixed animal practice is an attraction to me. (T / F)
3. I do not like to be challenged, and simply want to control fleas and vaccinate puppies. (T / F)
4. A farm/rural background is essential to be successful in rural practice. (T / F)
5. Females need not apply. (T / F)
6. I have no student loans and do not need to be paid a decent wage. (T / F)
7. Family/personal time is unimportant; I live to work. (T / F)
8. Veterinarians are born; mentoring and career development is not required. (T / F)
9. If I wanted to work with people and my community I would have been an MD. (T / F)
10. There is no difference in rural practices; I have no choice. (T / F)

A perfect score qualifies you for rural practice. The door to rural practice is wide open. You are trained well. Your confidence will grow and you can truly enjoy your profession. Why are you waiting?