



Common Interview Questions for Animal Care Professionals

The interview questions listed below are a sampling of commonly asked questions during an interview for an animal care related position.

General:

- Please give an example of something you value in a working relationship with your supervisor.
- Share an example of a challenging situation and how you dealt with it.
- Explain how you approach conflict with a coworker.
- Share a long term goal for your career or in this position if hired.
- Please give an example of a quality that you feel sets you apart from other candidates.
- Briefly describe why you would like to work for us.
- Please give a personal example of a strength and a weakness.
- Please outline your main responsibilities in your current or previous position.
- Describe your ideal workflow for the day.
- In your opinion, what are some qualities of a good animal care professional?
- How would your current supervisor or previous supervisor describe you?

Personal Background:

- Describe the meaning of conservation from your point of view and give an example of a conservation project that you have been involved with or supported.
- How do you handle situations at work with animals when things don't work out as expected?
- What would you do if you disagreed with a supervisor?
- What do you do to stay abreast of current issues in the profession?
- Describe your knowledge/experience with research.
- What is your philosophy regarding mentors and mentees?
- What is your experience with public speaking?
- What is your experience with dealing with the public and potential opposing positions?
- How would you handle a situation with an irate guest?
- What would you do/how would you handle a situation where you disagree with your co-worker?
- Describe a time when you were unhappy with feedback and how you dealt with it.
- Tell me about an important goal that you have set in the past and how you accomplished it.
- Explain a time when a guest needed something and you went above and beyond to get it/do it.
- Describe a time when you used persuasion/had to make an unpopular decision.
- Describe a situation in which you effectively delegated.
- Describe a time when you motivated others.
- Describe a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- Tell me someone who has influenced you in your career and how they affected you.
- In your opinion, what is the most important job at a zoo?

- How do you ensure a good relationship with other departments?
- Have you been involved in a breeding program? At what capacity?
- What animals have you manually restrained?

Work Ethic:

- What is your show/presentation philosophy?
- What information would you include in a 10 minute talk to guests?
- Describe the importance of AZA accreditation and how it relates to you as an employee.
- What are your views of euthanasia in a zoological setting?
- What is the role of the zookeeper in the current decade?
- How do you feel about animals in human care?

Animal Behavior and Husbandry:

- Identify some triggers that may cause aggression in certain animal species.
- What are USDA and AWA and how are they related?
- What is the importance of maintaining daily records?
- Would you be comfortable administering injections to an animal?
- What would you do if you disagreed with a medication being administered?
- What is a zoonotic disease? How do you prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases?
- What is the definition of enrichment?
- Describe your morning routine of arriving to work and checking on your area.
- Name a carnivore, primate, ungulate, and marsupial species. Choose one of your examples and describe the natural history.

Animal Training:

- What experience do you have with operant conditioning?
- Describe your training philosophy and what you think is important to have in your trainer's toolkit?
- Define a recall and describe how it is used.
- Please share one of your animal training accomplishments and one of your failures.
- What would you do if an animal leaves station during a session/presentation?
- Identify three of the Ten Laws of Shaping.
- Explain and give an example of the Premack Principle.

Marine Mammal Specific:

- Do you have experience in maintaining water quality?
- Describe the best practices for thawing fish.
- What are some important reasons that facilities display marine mammals?
- What is the Marine Mammal Protection Act?
- What is your philosophy regarding cooperative behaviors?