

International Perspective

By Brianna (Martin) Patterson '03, M'07

In June, six pre-veterinary medicine students experienced a three-week study tour to Rakuno Gakuen University in Ebetsu, Hokkaido, Japan. Students Natalie Ede, Melissa Lord, Sarah Flipse, Jessica Diefenbacher, Jade Braman and Rachael Gross were accompanied by Hiroaki Kawamura, Ph.D., chair of the department of language and culture.

The study tour is part of a continuing partnership with Rakuno. During the spring 2008 semester, five undergraduate Japanese students visited Findlay for three weeks. While on campus, those students gained hands-on experience with a focus on equestrian studies. They also had the opportunity to experience other parts of American culture, just as UF students experienced the Japanese culture this summer.

One of the most memorable parts of the trip to Japan was the opportunity to observe veterinarians behind the scenes at the penguin exhibit at the Asahi-yama Zoo, the most popular zoo in Japan. The assistant director of the zoo is a veterinarian and a graduate of Rakuno Gakuen University. He explained how the penguin exhibit works, from a veterinary's perspective, and each student even was able to hold a penguin.

Other experiences included visiting the animal hospital on campus, which is the largest veterinary hospital in Asia; job shadowing at a teaching hospital; milking dairy cows at Rakuno cow stables; riding in a hot air balloon; and bicycling from the dormitory to campus everyday.

For Braman, the day at an off-campus farm was a great experience. "I remember learning about ketosis (a common disease of adult cattle) at UF," she said. "It was eye-opening for me to see the cows showing symptoms of ketosis. My background knowledge from nutrition class helped me understand it better."

As a learning experience, the study tour further convinced each participant of her decision to pursue veterinary medicine. Kawamura hopes that this study tour, which will become an annual event, will help pre-vet students look at their field of study from a wider, cross-cultural perspective.



Top: Jessica Diefenbacher, Jade Braman, Rachael Gross, Natalie Ede, Sarah Flipse and Melissa Lord visit a first-year veterinary anatomy lab, where they worked with professors from Japan and Somalia.

Middle: Sarah Flipse holds a penguin behind the scenes at the penguin exhibit in the Asahi-yama Zoo.

Bottom: Rachael Gross milks a cow in Rakuno Gakuen University's milking parlor.