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Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions or need advice before the contest!



### **Advice and Suggestions for Smithcors Student Essayists**

As past chair of this essay contest committee and first-place winner several years in a row myself, I want to start by thanking you for your interest in the Smithcors Student Veterinary History Essay Contest! I would like to share my experience and offer you some of what I hope will be helpful advice.

I am so excited to welcome you into the world of veterinary history, so often overlooked by many of our peers. Through this contest, you will have the opportunity to research a veterinary history topic of your own choosing. Learning the history of our field is an amazing way to gain a deeper understanding of modern medicine, ethical decisions, business practices, and even ongoing research.

When I was a student, I became enamored with veterinary history through participation in this contest. I'd like to share some insights I gained through my experiences in researching and creating my essays. I hope these small bits of wisdom will provide some guidance as you begin the process for yourself, helping you not only to have a better chance at victory but to truly get the most out of this experience regardless of the result.

- **Start early!** Let's face it, you are busy, and procrastination is an easy choice. However, we all know procrastination only leads to more stress in the end. You may find that setting interim goals (deadline to pick topic, deadline to gather research, deadline to write introduction, etc) can help you keep on track.

- **Pay attention to the contest rules!** Don't put in all the research, write a beautiful essay, edit it repeatedly and then find out your essay is disqualified because you didn't take time to read the rules.
- **Carefully consider your topic.** Think of a few topics that capture your interest. Do some quick searches online to determine if enough literature is available on your topic. I abandoned one topic after having spent months trying to force it to work. I had purchased books I had hoped would be great sources, but when it came down to it, I was trying to stretch a very small amount of information into a 15-page paper. While it was difficult for me to let it go and pick a new topic, it was the right decision and allowed me to explore a new topic that led to a winning essay.
- **Know your own writing techniques.** Everyone works differently. Are you someone who writes in bite-sized pieces? Or are you someone who spends time studying and then writes the whole paper in a weekend? Whatever your technique may be, use it!
- **Ask your friends for a little help.** While it is important to edit and proofread your work, a fresh set of eyes may catch things you didn't, helping you to improve in areas you might not have recognized needed more work. I usually sent a copy to my father, a friend of mine with no experience in the veterinary field, and one of my classmates. They all provided different points of view and gave honest critiques.
- **Be wise with your online searches.** I think we've all learned by now that Wikipedia is not a valid source. However, it can be exceptionally useful in finding good, original source material. Check the "references section," where typically several books and articles are listed. This is often where I would turn when I felt stuck in my research, and it was a lifesaver! A new book or other source can reignite your spark after you've burned out from looking at the same material for too long. That being said, be sure to use search engines like PubMed and your school's library.
- **Study, study, study!** If you make yourself an "expert" on the subject before you begin writing, you may find the essay comes much more easily. You may even see the essay take shape before you begin writing as you tie points together in your mind.

Take on the essay-writing experience with passion, patience, and perseverance. Appreciate the process. Enjoy the learning. Your essay will be amazing!