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Hi! My name is Dr. Brad Christensen, and I am a veterinarian. I grew up in rural Wyoming where large animals were an important part of our lives. The people living around us were ranchers, and since my father is also a veterinarian, I spent a lot of time working alongside our neighbors as they cared for cattle, horses, and sheep. You can say I’ve been around animals my whole life.

For example, in the Dakotas, llamas are commonly used to herd sheep. They take really good care of the sheep and will courageously chase away coyotes! You can imagine how helpful llamas are to sheep farmers. These valued animals work alongside the farmers and are given regular medical care. I was able to care for many of them and alpacas, too, while I was at school.

Figure 1. This child is feeding a baby llama some carrots. This llama will grow up and be a working llama some day.
Have you ever seen bison? These mammals have a thick, wooly coat which means they’re better suited for cold-weather climates. Bison\textsuperscript{1} are big and can weigh between 1,500 and 2,200 pounds. In addition to that heft, they are wild and dangerous and strong. They’ll charge right through a fence or ram a truck! Well, Canadian ranchers, who keep big herds of bison just as we do cattle, had bought a herd from Wyoming (my home state).\textsuperscript{2} My father was hired to test the animals prior to sending them across the Canadian/American border, in large part, because we owned a big rodeo arena which the ranchers planned to keep the herd of bison in. They had to stay about three or four days to allow us to get all the work done, and the entire time, a full-time welder was there repairing the fences the bison kept destroying! My father and I drew blood from these animals for testing and vaccinated\textsuperscript{3} all of them as fast as we could. Even though bison are called domestic\textsuperscript{4} animals, they are still pretty wild!

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{bison_test}
\caption{Here is my father, working on a bison. Can you see how the horns are tied with rope? The bison must be still while the small amount of blood for the test is drawn. This doesn’t hurt him but rather keeps him from getting scared and hurting himself or my dad. Only a little bit of blood is drawn for tests. It won’t hurt him at all.}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Bison are related to cattle but are, technically, their own species. They are the largest land animals in North America.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Before you can introduce herds to a new country, the animals must be tested to be sure they are not carrying any diseases that can infect animals abroad.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Vaccines - Sometimes live, dead, or altered forms of pathogens (agents that cause disease) are injected into the body to improve immunity.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Domestic animals - Animals that have been tamed and are used to being with people.
\end{itemize}
Right now, I work in the city as a small-animal veterinarian. My average day consists of examining pets and giving vaccines to little puppies and kittens. I deliver baby animals, and when they’re born, we rub them with towels, suction liquid out of their throats, and help them start to nurse milk from their mothers. I also perform spay and neuter surgery,\textsuperscript{5} fix broken bones, deal with illness, and manage the animal hospital where sick pets are on IVs,\textsuperscript{6} and need liquid medications and sometimes X-rays.

![Figure 3. This is an X-ray of a turtle. A turtle's top shell is called a “carapace,” and its lower shell is called a “plastron.” The X-ray allows us to see what is going on inside the turtle without hurting him. Turtles are reptiles and lay eggs.](image)

While I mainly work with dogs and cats, occasionally I’ll see birds, ferrets, snakes, or iguanas. I really do not enjoy working with birds because I’ve gotten some

\textsuperscript{5} \textbf{Spay and neuter surgery} - Sometimes pet animals must have surgery to prevent reproduction. If you have sheep or cattle, you \textbf{want} them to reproduce, but most homes cannot accommodate endless supplies of puppies or kittens.

\textsuperscript{6} \textbf{IV} - This is an abbreviation of the term “intravenous therapy.” This is when liquid medicine is continuously delivered straight into the vein by use of a thin tubing and hollow needle. When medications are taken by mouth, the body must absorb them through the stomach or intestinal linings. IV medications immediately enter the bloodstream and have a much faster effect.