

College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University Brings Together Public Health With Animal Health

All photos courtesy of Ohio State University For the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University, veterinary medicine can be as relevant to people as it is to animals.

The college, established in 1885 in Columbus, Ohio, is internationally known for its Veterinary Public Health Program, a specialization within the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree available at the college.

This one-of-a-kind program—the only in the U.S.— was started in the fall quarter of 2005 so students could apply skills from the veterinary sciences to benefit the public health through promoting and preventing human diseases, says Armando Hoet, DVM, PhD, coordinator of the program.

The Veterinary Public Health Specialization within the MPH degree program, which takes 1.5 to 2 years to complete, allows students to pursue careers related to prevention and control of zoonotic and foodborne diseases in both animals and humans, an area that Dr. Hoet says is a growing field.

In all, 90 graduating students have enrolled in the last four years. The program attracts both established professionals and students who have freshly graduated with a bachelor's degree and intend to enter a DVM training program.

At a Glance

Location: Columbus, Ohio

Opening Date: 1885

Number of Students: 621

Programs Offered: DVM, DVM MPH, Ph.D., Masters, residency

Website: www.cvm.osu.edu Though core courses are required for the specialization and degree—including infectious disease epidemiology, zoonotic diseases, food safety, biosecurity and environmental health issues—the program is flexible, based on what students envision after graduation.

“The electives depend a lot on what they want to do,” Hoet says. “Pre-professionals are made more competitive to go to professional college. They will make you more competitive for the marketplace.”

With a variety of electives to choose from, these courses permit students to customize the degree to suit their needs. Students who are interested in a career in food safety, for example, can take food microbiology and processing courses and aspire to work for a government operation that might be interested in food quality for both animals and people.

The classroom isn't the only learning environment for students pursuing the Veterinary Public Health Specialization.

The program requires a practice placement for students, who must job-shadow a professional, such as working with a veterinarian at a local health department or working with companies that must research food safety issues, Hoet says. This educational experience isn't limited to the U.S., though. Students have traveled as far as Europe and Vietnam for their practice placement, learning about international public and animal health policies and regulations.

Before completing the degree specialization, students must also fulfill a culminating project, like a thesis or field research project that is relevant to their career interests. Hoet says one of his students' projects entailed research on whether European starlings carried a potentially pandemic virus.

It's these large-scale research projects that help make the program a popular option for those looking to be competitive in their field. Hoet says the MPH degree provides students the opportunity to become better, more competitive applicants,

and makes it more likely that entry-level salaries will be higher.

As the fields of veterinary medicine and public health become increasingly intertwined, Hoet says, such degree programs will become more popular in the U.S.

“In the veterinarian’s oath, we promise to use our knowledge to promote the public general health,” Hoet says. “That’s why these kind of degrees are so important right now.”

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