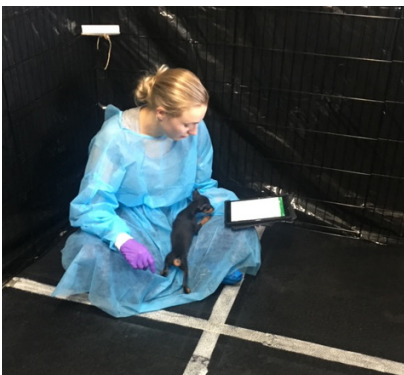




AN INTERVIEW WITH

AYNSLEY ROMANIUK



CURRENT STATUS:
PH.D. STUDENT

DEPARTMENT:
COMPARATIVE PATHOBIOLOGY

FACULTY ADVISOR:
DR. CANDACE CRONEY

"I wanted to be a part of improving animal's quality of life and make a difference."

What field of study is your undergraduate degree in?

I have a B.Sc. with an Honors Specialization in Psychology and a minor in Music.

What background or experiences do you have that led you to an animal-related career?

I initially pursued a career in finance after my undergrad but decided it wasn't for me. I knew I wanted to follow my passion and work with animals. That passion turned into a desire to pursue animal welfare during my undergrad thesis work, which focused on creating models of hypersensitivity in rats with relation to autism. During data collection I realized my favorite part was handling the rats and providing them with positive human interaction. I guess you could say I formed some sort of 'bond' with the rats, which led me to contemplate their well-being and start researching the field of animal welfare.

How/where were you first exposed to ideas about animal welfare?

I was first exposed to the idea of animal welfare while doing my undergrad thesis. During our rat handling certification they taught us how to tickle rats, which is done to reduce their fear of being handled and provide positive experiences. I loved the concept of increasing the rat's quality of life while they are likely subject to negative stimuli in a laboratory setting.

What led you to pursue an advanced degree in your field of study?

It felt like the next step. I wanted to be a part of improving animal's quality of life and make a difference. In my opinion, there's no better way to do this than to first educate yourself and then take action. Learning has always been a passion of mine, so committing to more years of school wasn't hard!

What type of a job are you interested in when you receive your degree?

Right now my plan is to stay in academia. I love doing research and I'm not sure I could give that up anytime soon! I'd also like to incorporate teaching and/or extension into a future position. I think it's extremely important to be able to effectively share information to a variety of audiences and I want to see this happen more in animal welfare.

AYNSLEY ROMANIUK



Photo on right:

Aynsley Romaniuk with members of the Croney Lab taking a break from research

How did you get connected with a faculty member in your area?

I got connected with Dr. Croney through a professor at Guelph University after expressing my interest in companion animal research. The professor told me Dr. Croney's work nicely aligned with my interest and that she was seeking graduate students. Dr. Croney and I had a series of visits, and a few months later I was officially a graduate student!

Any advice for an aspiring undergraduate?

Don't kill yourself over getting a 4.0 GPA. That's not what's going to get you accepted. Focus on strengthening skills you might use in graduate school (e.g., initiative, time management, critical thinking), being able to collaborate with others, and networking with people in your field. I would also recommend having some research experience before graduate school so you know what you're signing up for!



Why did you select Purdue?

The main reasons I selected Purdue were the field of research and the people. My lab is doing research with commercial-breeding dogs, that isn't being done anywhere else in the world. I really wanted to be a part of this innovative and extremely applied area of research. The people are what closed the deal for me. When I first came to visit Purdue, Dr. Croney, her lab members, and the Veterinary College were so friendly and welcoming that it made me feel like I belonged. This was extremely important to me as I'm an international student from Canada and had to move away from home. I don't think I would have chosen Purdue if both factors weren't there!

