

## PATHWAYS TO ANIMAL WELFARE SCIENCE

# LEANNE NIEFORTH

### ANIMAL WELFARE & HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION

**What field of study is your undergraduate degree in?** I graduated from North Carolina State University with a BS in Animal Science and an MS in Communication.

**How/where were you first exposed to ideas about animal welfare?** My parents did a great job teaching me how to interact with and learn about my various childhood pets. They were the first to expose me to ideas about animal welfare and appropriate human-animal interactions.

**What background or experiences do you have that led you to an animal-related career?** I have always been interested in the bond between humans and animals, but in college I started working at an organization that did equine-assisted psychotherapy for teenage girls who had experienced trauma. The progress that the girls made in the program and in their everyday lives once they had started working with the horses fascinated me.

**What is the relationship between your research on the human-animal bond and animal welfare?** My research focuses on defining the efficacy and role of service dogs for veterans with PTSD. As we continue to learn more about the service dog/veteran relationship, we can further explore the best ways to uphold high standards of canine welfare.

**What advice would you give to a novice student who hasn't had your background or experiences to get their foot in the door as a graduate student in animal welfare at Purdue?** I would encourage them to build a network of people who study Animal Welfare and related topics. Ask questions of these individuals and build knowledge from their collective experiences that can frame what you want to explore in your graduate program.



**CURRENT STATUS:** GRADUATE STUDENT  
**DEPARTMENT:** COMPARATIVE PATHOBIOLOGY  
**FACULTY ADVISOR:** DR. MAGGIE O'HAIRE

**What type of a job are you interested in when you receive your degree?** I would love to be Professor of Human Animal Interaction once I receive my degree.

**How did you get connected with a faculty member in your area?** As an undergraduate, I got connected with faculty by sending an email mentioning that I was interested in getting involved in research and asking if they would be willing to meet and talk about the research that they were currently working on. I followed through on those meetings and made sure I was prepared to discuss and to ask questions.

**Any advice for an aspiring undergraduate?** Never hesitate to ask questions. Every faculty member and graduate student was an undergraduate at one point in time. Though their individual experiences may be different, the perspective and advice they have may be exactly what you need.

### WHY DID YOU SELECT PURDUE?

I selected Purdue because of the strength of its human-animal interaction program and the opportunity to learn from the amazing faculty.

