

Diary of a parliamentary intern

Now six months into his parliamentary internship in the House of Lords, Anthony Ridge reflects on what his day-to-day role entails.

One of the nice things about being a vet is that when you are asked what you do for a living it is usually a simple question to answer. However, since starting my internship I have discovered that explaining what my job entails has become a lot more difficult. Stating that I work in the House of Lords is usually met with a variable mix of surprise, confusion and intrigue, but doesn't really help to explain what I do.

I am lucky enough to work just across the road from the Palace of Westminster and even after six months I can't help but stare in awe at my surroundings. Arriving at my desk I tend to start the day by scrolling through e-mails and reviewing upcoming parliamentary events, including debates and meetings in the House of Lords. I then make a list of tasks and typically find that my day is split about evenly into administrative and research work.

The administrative work entails organising events and meetings and helping to manage Lord Trees' diary. This aspect of my role seems the furthest removed from my old job as

a clinician but I have found that it provides an excellent opportunity to make contact with a broad network of individuals within politics and across the profession. The internship is funded through a small company supported by sponsors and liaising with sponsors, and keeping track of finances, has taught me a lot about how a small company is set up and run.

My research role has a much stronger veterinary focus and involves collecting information on any issues relevant to Lord Trees' work. Recently this has included antibiotic use and resistance data (which will soon be published on our website at vprf.wordpress.com), animal welfare codes and the remodelling of the horserace betting levy. For example, if a new piece of legislation has been proposed (either at EU or UK level) I will spend time collecting factual information on the topic, information on what the legislation proposes and the views of any stakeholders affected. Through this work I am constantly learning both about the topics themselves and also about political processes.

I usually meet twice a day with Lord Trees to exchange information and discuss future plans. Many days also include other events such as functions relating to animal health and



welfare issues, meetings of all-party parliamentary groups and ad-hoc meetings with veterinary organisations, peers and government officials.

Six months in, I am still relishing the unique opportunities that the internship provides and feel that my role is continuing to develop and progress as time goes by. Perhaps by September 2017, when I finish the internship, I will have found a quick way to explain what my role entails, but for now I will continue to ramble enthusiastically about the internship to anyone who is willing to listen!

doi: 10.1136/vr.i3062