

From Apes to Zebras

It is harder to become a vet than to be a doctor. Training opportunities are fewer. Competition is extremely high. Only a few exceptional students will be called to interview at their chosen university. These interviews can be daunting. Cambridge University has just made the interview process even harder. Animals now sit on the interviewing panel. Makes good sense. Cwg can proudly share with you a transcript obtained from one such interviewing process.

Chair of the Panel: Good morning Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones: I've changed my name to Lionel Foxlove.

Chair: Well Mr. Foxglove, adopting an animal name won't help you very much I'm afraid. We had someone calling themselves Tiger Woods in here the other day and he didn't get offered a place and neither did Taylor Swift, Snoop Dogg or Bear Grylls. My name is Shergar, (yes, I know what you're thinking) and I and my colleagues on the Panel would like to ask you a few questions.

[Mr. F. is looking sheepish which might gain him a few brown bear points.]

Please note that translations will be facilitated by Sir David Attenborough, 96, the world-famous naturalist, through a video link.

S.D.A. 96: Can you see me? Can't see you.

Chair: *[Neighing loudly and s-l-o-w-l-y.]* There's a button bottom left on the screen with a video camera picture. Try pressing that.

[S.D.A. 96, appears on screen wearing his pyjamas and eating a sausage roll.]

Chair: May we begin now please? You first, Tiddles?

Cat: Miaow.

S.D.A, 96: Have you got GCSE biology?

What she really said: Did I just see a mouse run under the table?

Chair: You next, Drominic?

Camel: *[In a bad mood. Has got the hump]* A sort of grunt.

S.D.A, 96: What makes you think you've got what it takes to be a vet?

What he really said: You look like a complete loser Mr. F.

Chair: You next, Percy.

Parrot: Squawk.

S.D.A, 96: What area of veterinary medicine are you particularly attracted to?

What he really said: Who's a pretty boy then?

Chair: You next, Clara.

Quail: High-pitched screech.

S.D.A, 96: Have you been watching 'Frozen Planet' on the tele? It's very good.
(This question is sponsored by the BBC hoping it will detract from the Gary Lineker fiasco).

What she really said: Look, I keep telling you I'm a snail, not a quail for goodness sake.

S.D.A. 96: Easy mistake to make. And for the record, I am not a naturist (motto 'where bare is beautiful' but a naturalist). Another easy mistake to make.

Chair: You next, Dippy. *[Please note: a diplodocus has front legs that are much shorter than those at the back so it keeps falling over.]*

Dinosaur: Part of the soundtrack from Jurassic Park.

S.D.A, 96: How would you treat a Tyrannosaurus Rex if one walked into your surgery complaining of a headache?

What he/she/they/it (non-binary) really said: I reckon St. David of Attenborough is nearly as old as me you know.

Chair: Now your turn, Pike.

Pike: Bubbling like a hookah.

S.D.A, 96: How much do you think we should be concerned about the state of our polluted rivers?

What he really said: Mum wouldn't like it Mr. Mainwaring.

Chair: In conclusion Mr. Foxglob, are there any questions you would like to ask the panel?

Mr. F: You haven't asked me anything about my experience with caring for animals. For example I volunteered in a safari park in.....

Tiddles: Oooh! Did you see any mice?

Mr. F: Well no but *[pause]* I saw lions and tigers and big game and....

Camel: Well you won't be seeing many of those in Surrey or The Cotswolds or wherever you intend to practice, mate.

[Parrot and quail (or snail?) have disappeared. Tiddles is looking very pleased with herself.]

Chair: Any more questions before we inform you that you have failed the interview?

Mr. F: Can one get any financial assistance to go on one of these courses? I heard that the police here in the capital are offering financial support in order to upgrade their image. 'MetVets Avoid VetDebts' I think the scheme is called.

Chair: I am afraid Mr. Foxphob that we cannot offer you a place to study veterinary sciences but you might be interested in one of our shorter courses.

Mr. F.:Like what?

Chair: Well. A higher certificate in rat-catching for example or a placement in lion-taming at Zippo's Circus – sorry, wait a minute, they aren't doing that one any more, or 'pin the tail on the donkey' involving a real donkey and a real tail, that's a half day course based in Epsom or.....

S.D.A. 96. [*Still struggling with the technology.*] Might I just put in a plug for my new series starting on BBC IPlayer this Sunday? It is called 'Wild Isles' and you can see an Orca Whale killing a baby seal and a Sea Eagle killing a Barnacled Goose and...

[S.D.A. 96 *realises the interview has ended and everyone has gone home apart from the parrot and the quail, or was it a snail?*]