

## Something out of the ordinary...

From the age of 8, Dr Jo Hedley knew she wanted to be a vet and her only other profession of choice at that time was a zoo keeper so she was pretty much destined to have a career with animals no matter what!

After joining general practice following her graduation, Jo found herself drawn to exotics. "There's so much we don't know about these animals which makes for a very interesting career- they're just fascinating!"

Jo is based at the RVC's Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital in north London where, she says, there is no such thing as an average day.

*"Literally anything could walk through the door. This week we have spayed a snake and treated a snail with a damaged shell."*

*"The main problem with exotics is that it's so hard for owners to realise there is anything wrong- someone can come in with a 'slightly sick' bird, who is actually critically ill and many of these animals have such fast metabolisms that just missing one or two meals can be the equivalent of our average pets not eating for days."*

Small mammals and exotics rarely show signs of disease until problems are advanced at which time they generally need critical care. We are fortunate enough to have received funding from The Barry Green Memorial Fund to purchase an ISTAT- this equipment will mean that we can tailor our care to the exotic patient immediately, rather than waiting 1-2 days for lab results, when the patient is already deteriorating. Instant adjustments to treatments can be made, giving the patients a much better chance of recovery.

Jo has exotic pets of her own, a snake called Marble as well as two lovebirds and a tortoise. Life is never dull! I asked Jo what she would advise anyone looking at getting an exotic pet and the key thing was information based on science and not opinion. Making sure that you do your research ahead of making any commitment and



seeking advice from a specialist vet is critical. Are you the right owner for the pet that you have your heart set on?

*"They say a dog is for life and not just for Christmas but tortoises can live to 120 yrs old so do you know how they will be looked after when you're gone? Are you prepared to recreate the Mediterranean in your house so that they are living in the right conditions? Do you know what to feed them so they remain fit and healthy?"*

Choosing a pet is often the easiest part of the process, gathering the information you need to decide whether you can cope with that pet is absolutely vital.

The RVC's Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital is based at our Camden Campus. The hospital's Exotics Team put on regular, free information evenings for owners of exotic pets, so keep an eye on their website or like their Facebook page for further information:

[rvc.ac.uk/beaumont-sainsbury-animal-hospital](http://rvc.ac.uk/beaumont-sainsbury-animal-hospital)

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