



## CHRISTY NUSS ZOOKEEPER, ASIA QUEST

### 1. When did you begin working at the Columbus Zoo?

I started working at the Zoo as a seasonal employee in 1998, and I became a full-time employee in 2002.

### 2. What education and animal experiences helped you secure a job in Animal Care?

My degree in Animal Science helped a little. I also gained some livestock experience through school. However, most of my animal experience was outside of school. I worked at a nature center as a kid, where I took care of a random assortment of animals like birds of prey, various waterfowl, skunks, rabbits, snakes, ferrets, a fox, some raccoons, mice, rats, chinchillas, and some opossums. Most of the animals were rehabilitated and could not return to the wild. I also rode horses in my spare time, and in college, I worked at the large animal hospital where I sat with sick foals.

### 3. What skills are the most important in your job?

We do a lot of cleaning. It is also extremely important to have good observation skills and be able to handle changes in everyday routines. Finally, it helps to have patience, especially with the animals and the people you work with!

### 4. What is a typical day for your current position?

We usually start the day with getting diets ready for the animals, feeding, and cleaning outdoor and indoor areas for the animals. We usually try to take a break as a department, but that does not always work out. Then, we clean the markhor yard together, take lunch, and complete any computer work we may need to do. Lastly, we do afternoon feeding and then go home!

### 5. What advice would you give me to help me work in Animal Care?

I would try and get as much animal experience as possible, whether that is working/volunteering at a horse barn (or any barn), vet hospital, animal rehabilitation center, or nature center (like the Ohio Wildlife Center).

### 6. How does this career impact your personal and lifestyle choices?

It does not impact too much; however, working in animal care means someone has to work every day of the week, so not everyone has weekends off, and that can affect one's personal

life. Many team members have weekdays off and work weekends, and schedules often depend on seniority at most zoos.

### 7. What is the hardest part of your job?

The hardest parts of our job include sending animals to other zoos (especially babies who were born at our facility) and when an animal dies, particularly when it is unexpected. The job is also very physical and if you have any injuries or pain, it does make the job a challenge.

### 8. What is the best part of your job?

There are many great parts of this job, including:

- Welcoming babies of any kind—it is also stressful!
- When you know an animal recognizes you and is happy to see you
- When you spend time training and building a relationship with an animal, and over time, you see the results of that in their trust
- Training is a lot of fun, too!
- Seeing an animal really engage with enrichment and enjoy themselves

### 9. Does the work you do at the Zoo impact the animals around the world?

Working with specific animals may not always impact animals in their native range directly; however, it does lead to important knowledge we can share with others to provide opportunities to educate people about the animals in the wild and how to help them. The Zoo does give money to many conservation organizations, and our Keeper Talks enable us to talk about all that the Zoo does to help wildlife.

### 10. What is the most important thing you do for the well-being of the animals in your care?

I think enrichment is super important. Keeping the animals busy and helping them use their natural behaviors is very beneficial to them living in human care. Animals can get bored easily, and keeping them active and engaged is important. I also think training for health checks, such as injections and desensitizing to medical procedures, is extremely important. The training helps to reduce stress for the animal, which helps their overall wellbeing.

# ZOO KEEPER INTERVIEWS

