

IVEP

Hokkaido University-Kasetsart University
International Vet Exchange Program 2024
Achieving Global Standards of Excellence in Veterinary Education



Student Report from
School of Veterinary Medicine,
Hokkaido University
September 30th to November 22nd

Project Managers
Kasetsart University

Professor Seiji KATAGIRI
Laboratory of Theriogenology, Hokkaido University

Kasetsart University

Eimi SUZUI, 5th year

The Kasetsart University Exchange Program is one of the longest programs in the IVEP, providing students with a wonderful opportunity to deepen their practical learning in Thailand. As the program celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2024, I would like to express my gratitude and respect for all the efforts and cooperation that have supported this program. I feel fortunate to have been able to participate in this milestone year, and I sincerely hope the program continues to grow in the future.

At Kasetsart University, the course content changes weekly. In the first two weeks, we studied aquatic animals; in the third week, horses; in the fourth and fifth weeks, ruminants; in the sixth week, exotic animals; in the seventh week, swine; and in the eighth week, pathology. I will report on my experiences in the exotic animal and swine classes.

The Exotic Unit has dedicated examination rooms, an elephant treatment facility, and a raptor treatment facility on campus. In the examination room, I observed various cases, including parrots infected with ABV, a cockatoo with a broken wing, a squirrel with overgrown incisors, a turtle that had swallowed a fishing hook, and emergency patients like a mara. Additionally, hospitalized animals included rabbits, tortoises, and exotic animals like tree shrews and civet cats, which are rarely seen outside of zoos, making this experience both interesting and enjoyable. I also had the chance to observe surgeries, particularly one involving a parrot with a burned crop, which was very impressive. The surgery involved carefully removing a small necrotic portion of the crop (about 1 cm) and suturing it, which the attending veterinarian performed with great precision. I was amazed by the high success rate of such surgeries, which reportedly has a near 100% success rate. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to practice handling rabbits, administering injections and blood tests on turtles, and administering oral treatments to snakes. The elephant treatment facility had a very high ceiling and specialized large fixtures and intravenous equipment, creating an overwhelming atmosphere. Fortunately, I was able to assist in treating an elephant with overgrown toenails that caused foot pain, swelling, and inflammation due to neglect in care. Normally, an elephant's nails are naturally worn down through walking, but this particular elephant had been confined in a small room for a long time due to its aggressive nature, which led to a decrease in movement and worsened the condition. Additionally, the elephant's food intake had been reduced to prevent weight gain, leaving it visibly emaciated. The treatment involved trimming the nails and surrounding tissue to relieve the pressure on its feet, followed by disinfection and the administration of anti-inflammatory medication. I realized how elephants have historically been integral to Thai society and how they continue to be indispensable, while also requiring cautious and ethical handling due to their strength and potential danger. As a veterinarian, this experience reinforced the importance of offering better living conditions for wild animals and expanding ethical awareness towards them. The raptor treatment facility focuses on rescuing injured wild raptors and rehabilitating them for reintroduction into the wild. I observed multiple raptors, including those with sight impairments and fractures, being cared for and treated. In handling these birds, we learned the importance of not handling them recklessly due to the sharpness of their beaks and talons. Additionally, I was taught to avoid overstretching their wings during care, as they have a strong instinctual fear of humans. I participated in tasks such as capturing and restraining birds, weighing them, conducting physical examinations, and performing blood tests and injections. These tasks were vital learning experiences that I will never forget. Through this entire class, I gained a deeper understanding of wild animal biology, health management, and their relationship with the natural environment. The opportunity to learn in a way that isn't possible in Japan was an invaluable experience, and I am grateful for it. Moreover, I was impressed by Kasetsart University's commitment to providing such an extraordinary learning environment.

At the Swine Unit, we visited an actual pig farm and observed the farm operations. We discussed issues with farmers and professors and engaged in group discussions to identify problems and propose solutions. This experience helped me understand the importance of biosecurity measures like effective fencing and vaccinations, as well as proper farming environments and feed management to prevent stress and immune suppression. In Japan, we don't have many opportunities to visit farms and debate management strategies, so this was an eye-opening experience. I also participated in post-mortem examinations of pigs, including an African Swine Fever (ASF) case. It was particularly notable that, although we observed textbook symptoms (cyanosis, pinpoint hemorrhages in the kidneys), the typical signs of hemorrhagic infarction in the spleen and swelling of the tonsils were absent. PCR testing confirmed ASF, highlighting the importance of laboratory diagnostics, as pathological findings alone may not always provide a definitive diagnosis. This experience also led me to reconsider the importance of preventing the spread of cross-border infectious diseases like ASF, which has never been reported in Japan. Throughout the program, I gained invaluable experiences that would not have been possible in Japan. I also had many opportunities to interact with Kasetsart University students, making the classes both enjoyable and rewarding.

There were many other aspects of the program, including other courses, daily life, and weekend trips, that I would have liked to share, but due to space constraints, I encourage you to ask me about them. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the professors, staff, and students at Kasetsart University, the members of Hokkaido University, and the other students participating in this program. Thanks to everyone, I was able to have a fulfilling and wonderful time. I will strive to use the knowledge gained from this experience to contribute to society. I look forward to the day when students from Kasetsart University come to Hokkaido University, and I hope to meet again somewhere in the future. Thank you so much.



elephant

Symposium Commemorating
the 10th Anniversary of
the Student Exchange Program



Minagi HIROSE, 5th year

Reflecting on the two months of my internship at Kasetsart University from September 27 to November 23, 2024, I am filled with unforgettable memories of this wonderful experience.

Every class at Kasetsart University was new and interesting for me. I participated in different units every week, receiving intensive lessons and practical training. Among them, the Ruminant Unit left the deepest impression on me, and I would like to talk about that experience.

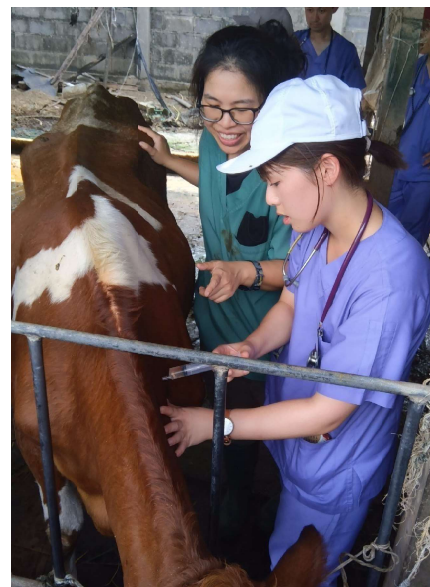
In Japan, when we study ruminants, we mostly focus on cattle, but in Thailand, veterinary students learn not only about cattle but also about goats (mainly raised for milk) and water buffaloes (traditionally used for plowing fields). I was amazed by the size of the water buffaloes that were often brought to the university hospital. At a farm with many goats, we had to catch each goat and check for anemia. At first, I was overwhelmed by the large number of goats, but by the end, we became quite skilled at catching the goats. What stood out most as different from my previous experiences in Japan was the farm visits. While in Japan we also conduct physical examinations and medication practice on actual cattle, in Thailand, students get their own cases and treat them by themselves. The process began with taking a history of the sick animals or the managements from the owner, followed by a physical exam to make a diagnosis. Based on the diagnosis, we decided on the appropriate treatment, dosage, and method of administration, and we carried out the treatments. The next day, we visited the farm again to follow up on the case. This entire process was led by the students, with the teachers providing advice. We had encountered cattle diseases only in textbooks and exams, never in face, it was far more difficult than expected to make a quick diagnosis and choose the correct treatment in such a limited amount of time. There were many times I couldn't answer the teacher's questions about the correct treatment, which made me realize how much I lacked practical knowledge and skills. However, through conversation with the teachers, I was able to gain a deeper understanding about cattle care.

Another deeply memorable experience was witnessing infectious diseases that do not exist in Japan. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is an endemic infectious disease in Thailand and occurs frequently. Initially, the first week of the Ruminant Unit was supposed to take place at the Nong Pho farm, which is far from the Kamphaeng Saen campus. However, just before we moved, an outbreak of FMD occurred in that area, and we were unable to go. Therefore, we continued our classes in Kamphaeng Saen, but in the second week, an outbreak occurred at the university's demonstration farm. The teacher took us to see the infected cattle at the farm, as none of us had ever seen FMD-infected animals before. The infected cattle were isolated from the healthy ones and exhibited symptoms such as excessive salivation, oral lesions, and swelling around the hooves. In Japan, we learn that FMD is a terrible disease, so I was initially terrified of how severe the symptoms would be. However, the symptoms were milder than I had imagined. In Thailand, FMD-infected cattle are not culled; they are treated with antibiotics to prevent secondary infections, and most of them recover in a few weeks with a good prognosis. In Japan, if even one cow is infected with FMD, all cattle on the farm are subject to culling, and it is difficult to even enter the farm. I was shocked by the differences in the response to and awareness of FMD between Thailand and Japan. In addition to FMD, I also had the opportunity to see infections like Lumpy Skin Disease, Trypanosomiasis, and Anaplasmosis firsthand.

The Thai students were incredibly active and talented. Most of them were able to discuss topics in English, and every Friday, they spend a long time to prepare their presentations, making sure to create clear and well-organized materials. In Japan, there are rarely any voluntary questions from students after presentations, but in Thailand, students frequently asked questions and engaged in lively discussions about each other's presentations. Moreover, they were very kind and welcoming to us international students. In class, if we didn't understand something, they took the time to explain it thoroughly until we understood. After class, they would invite us to join activities like going to eat Mu-kratha (Thai-style BBQ) or attending Muay Thai classes. It was my first experience of becoming so close to people from a culture different from my own.

Every weekend, I spent my time traveling around Thailand. I enjoyed the energetic and vibrant Bangkok, the beautiful sea and turtles of Koh Tao, the spicy and delicious Isaan cuisine, the sunset in Khon Kaen, and the Loy Krathong festival in Sukhothai. Through these travels, I encountered the kindness of Thai people and the charm of Thailand, and I am certain that I will visit Thailand again. Also, I am grateful to my fun classmates who traveled with me.

The beautiful way to the veterinary faculty from our dormitory, the affordable and delicious lunch at the canteen, the lively university market, and the hot everyday with temperatures close to 30 °C have all become treasured memories in my life and a driving force in my motivation. When I think about the outstanding, kind, and cheerful students, the passionate and knowledgeable teachers, and the supportive staff members, I feel inspired to continue making efforts and developing my knowledge and skills more and more as a veterinarian. In the future, I hope to work internationally and someday meet them again. Finally, I would like to deeply thank the teachers and staff at Hokkaido University's for providing me with this valuable opportunity and for all their support, as well as everyone who support my Thai stay.



hands on training at Ruminant unit

the sunset in Khon Kaen





Kasetsart University

Yunosuke MIZUKI, 5th year

I am appreciating it to write this report to conclude the brilliant stay in Thailand. For the past two months must be one of the greatest periods in my life, I can't afford to make a report of everything I learned and experienced in KU. Then, I will write down two units in my report.

1) Equine unit

The third week was equine unit, which was the most impressive one for me. Although I love horses and have a little experience to ride on them, I was almost fresh to veterinary of horses. In Japan, we have not many chances to learn about and take practical training with horses, even horses should be considered as one of the essential animals for us. I was surprised at the fact that in Thailand, a large number of horses was treated as companion animals like dogs and cats did, and we had some chances to see them while our clinical practice.

On the first day of the unit, we visited the demonstration farm and conduct basic physical examinations and abdominal ultrasonic procedure. Although we had experienced basic physical examinations of horses in OUAVM, the chance was limited since such clinical classes were set on only morning. However, in KU, we treated them one by one with fully support of teachers. I felt confident by this environment and cuteness of horses.

The following day was planned to observe the surgery of two horses; one is ovariohysterectomy of the case with endometritis, and the other is the removal of squamous cell carcinoma. It was first time to observe the surgery, so it was not easy to understand everything conducted in the surgical field. Nevertheless, the surgeon taught us clearly while waiting for the patient to wake up. I was fascinated to help her stand up after waking up from anaesthesia, though all I did was pulling the rope.

On the Thursday, we woke up early and took the van to the horse-riding club. I couldn't wait the day, since this experience must work well even after coming back to Japan. It was my first time to visit foreign horse-riding clubs, so I enjoyed comparing the facility or practice. I thought the facility was well designed even there was some difference from Japanese ones, but the teacher found some risks in the stable. We discussed the risks and gave suggestion to reduce them.

Every Friday was set to make a presentation of what we learned in the whole week. In equine unit, ours was about the two surgeries we saw on the Wednesday. It was our second time to give a presentation in KU, but we still felt nervous by the solid questions and advices from the teachers.



Pathological unit



cycling

2) Pathological unit

The pathological unit was on the last week of our stay. To say the truth, I had little knowledge and experience in pathology, so I was worried about this session. Contrary to my worries, the teachers gave us amazing lecture and practice. In the class of blood parasites, we observe them living in blood with microscope. We saw some parasites (Theileria, Trypanosoma, etc.) not existing in Japan, which was great experience for us. We guess which parasites live in the bovine blood samples and try to conduct PCR on the Thursday on the basis of our prediction. The quiz was not so difficult, but we have some hardness like contamination.

In addition to the class, the teachers in every unit were so kind. In pathological unit, one teacher gave us cups of coffee and some snacks in order to feeling sleepy. We were surprised at how he took care of our health. We finally understood why he was adored by Thai students.

3) Campus life

We enjoyed our stays in Kamphaengsaeng. The campus was so beautiful that we sometimes went cycling and hung around. We went to the night market almost every day, which was fantastic daily routine for me, but two months was not enough to fulfill our greed to try every menu. The cafeteria was also amazing for us. We ate every lunch there and I can't decide which shop was the best. Now I can't wait to enjoy Thai meal, so I wish our university had such cafeteria in the campus.

In addition to its environment, the students were also so kind and friendly that we stayed in the campus with almost no trouble. Sometimes we had lunch together and even they took us outside to have dinner. They are our best friends, so I wish we can keep in touch even after our graduation. Although the number of classes we took together was limited (only one week), we Japanese were surprised at how fluently and confidently they spoke English and gave presentations in English. I envy them by the fact that they have more chances to output their English and improve their skills.

Next time in Japan, we will make the most to entertain them.

During my stay in Thailand, I felt many similarities between Japanese and Thai, and our relationships can be nurtured more. I'm sure Thailand is one of the most essential partners for us. With the experience in the two months, we will raise more brilliant and secure future in veterinary and agricultural fields, with world-wide perspectives.

Again, thank you to everyone who supported us in our stays in Thailand. I will be happy if we meet again in the future.



Equine Unit



Kanchanaburi

Takeru HORIKAWA, 5th year

The HU-KU exchange program provided me with a great opportunity to learn many things in Thailand. All of the units in the program were excellent. In addition to learning in each unit, I had the chance to gain valuable experiences to share every weekend. However, I would like to specifically describe the 10th anniversary symposium and the Aquatic Animal Unit here.

Symposium Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Student Exchange Program under the framework of AIMS program

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the veterinary education collaboration between Japan and Thailand. The collaboration in veterinary education between the two countries began in the 2013 academic year as part of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) program, implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (currently known as the Asian International Mobility for Students program). Currently, the project continues as an exchange program between various universities (Kasetsart University, Chulalongkorn University, Rakuno Gakuen University, the University of Tokyo, and Hokkaido University). Over the past 10 years, around 100 students from both Thailand and Japan have participated in the program. Many of them have gone on to make significant contributions in universities, international organizations, and other fields after their participation. It is a great honor for me to have been able to participate in such a program. I hope to apply the knowledge and experience I gained through the program to my future career and strive to contribute to society.

At the 10th Anniversary Symposium, the first session introduced the activities so far and what these efforts have brought to each university. In the second session, presentations were made by students who had graduated after experiencing the exchange program. All of the graduates shared how they had experienced international cooperation activities after their studies, obtained degrees, and later worked in universities or international organizations, applying their expertise in veterinary medicine. They all mentioned that this program had been a turning point in their lives. In the third session, special lectures were held for the program participants and undergraduate students from Kasetsart University, Hokkaido University, and Rakuno Gakuen University. The lectures focused on slightly advanced topics, particularly aimed at students who had participated in clinical rotations.

In the evening, a celebratory party was held. Thai cuisine was served in courses, and a traditional Thai classical dance called "Khon" was performed by children. The children danced carefully and beautifully. The children's performance was wonderful, and when the dance ended, the venue was filled with a long and loud round of applause. The party was luxurious, with everyone enjoying Thai food while watching Thai dance, and everyone had a great time. Additionally, to mark the 10th anniversary, a video reflecting on the past 10 years of the program was shown. All the students featured in the video looked vibrant and were enjoying their practical training. Watching that video, I made a firm resolution to fully commit to this program. I would like to express my sincere respect and gratitude to all those who prepared this symposium and to those who have continued the collaboration program over the past 10 years.



Aquatic Animal Unit

In this unit, I studied clinical veterinary medicine and public health related to the fisheries industry in Thailand. I particularly focused on the management of aquaculture, including tilapia and shrimp, clinical diagnostics, and clinical pathology. In Japan, I took courses on fish diseases, specifically focusing on infectious diseases in fish and shrimp, but I had never studied aquatic animal management. Therefore, the lectures on the overview of aquaculture management were extremely interesting. Additionally, I visited farms to observe how they are managed and learned what aspects are monitored. Furthermore, I participated in lab work, including dissection, blood sampling, and water quality testing. It was a so substantial two-week unit. Below, I will describe some of the parameters of aquaculture management and farm visits in more detail.

The most important factor to monitor in aquaculture management is water quality. Factors that affect water quality include water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, ammonia, nitrites, and turbidity. These parameters are interconnected; for example, when water temperature rises, the metabolism of aquatic organisms increases, leading to higher oxygen consumption. Additionally, the solubility of oxygen decreases, causing a reduction in dissolved oxygen levels. As dissolved oxygen decreases, the pH also tends to drop. By organizing these parameters in this way, potential problems can be identified. Thai students gave presentations on these topics, and I was impressed by their presentation and discussion skills. They seemed more accustomed to presenting and engaging in discussions than the veterinary students from Hokkaido University.

Next, I will describe the farm visits. During this training, we visited a shrimp farm and a farm for ornamental fish. The shrimp farm, in particular, was unfamiliar to me in Japan, so everything about it was fascinating. From a veterinary perspective, I paid attention to various aspects and asked several questions during the visit. Many of the things we observed, such as the farm's structure, water supply system, waste management system, and water quality management system, were things I had learned about in the previous week's lectures, and it was valuable to see how they function in practice. The most interesting part of the visit was observing the shrimp toilet. Some shrimp are expelled together. It is possible to infer from the color of the shrimp whether they died during excretion or before the excretion process began. This kind of observation can help identify potential problems on the farm. There were many other fascinating aspects, and I thoroughly enjoyed the visit.

In conclusion, The Aquaculture Unit was one of the most interesting units in this exchange program. Japan imports approximately 10,000 tons of shrimp from Thailand, and Thailand remains a key trading partner for aquatic products. I had wanted to visit aquaculture sites in Thailand, which is important for Japan's seafood industry. Additionally, I had little prior knowledge about aquatic animal management and was eager to learn more. Through this practical training, I was able to learn a great deal and accomplish my goals. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the instructors who gave lectures during the Aquaculture Unit, and to everyone who taught me so much. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude for all the support I received, both during the unit and beyond.

Prospect of the HU-KU exchange program

Finally, regarding the program in the coming years, I truly believe this program is wonderful. Since it was relatively long-term, there was a lot to learn, and much of the work was hands-on. Having presentations every week was not easy, but it was important because it provided an opportunity to practice summarizing key points of each unit and engaging in group work. It might have been even better if I had been able to take more classes with Thai students (although Thai students have a lot of knowledge and are skilled in discussions, so it is challenging to keep up with them). If there is anything I can do to help further enhance the exchange program in the coming years, I would be happy to assist. I hope the program will continue for the next 10 or 20 years, and I look forward to the 20th anniversary celebration. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved in the program.



Aqua unit

IVEP

Hokkaido University-Kasetsart University International Vet Exchange Program 2024 Achieving Global Standards of Excellence in Veterinary Education



Student Report from Kasetsart University January 14th to February 28th 2025

From Kasetsart University

Pongsakorn Hourungroj (Fluke), 6th year

Studying at a prestigious institution like Hokkaido University has broadened my perspective, especially in the field of veterinary research. The laboratories within the faculty are at the forefront of scientific discovery, with research topics that are both innovative and distinct from those I have encountered in Thailand. This experience has allowed me to explore new perspectives and methodologies that will undoubtedly shape my future career.

Among the many impressive courses I attended, the Wildlife Lab was the most memorable. One of the highlights was the field trip to observe Steller's sea lions, the largest sea lion species in the world, which inhabit the coastal waters around Hokkaido. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat and to engage in discussions with conservationists dedicated to protecting them. This experience deepened my understanding of wildlife-human conflict, a global issue that manifests in different ways across regions.

Another remarkable experience was with the Theriology Lab, where I had the chance to visit Asahiyama Zoo. During this visit, I observed both the clinical and exhibition aspects of zoo management. As someone passionate about nature and conservation, being able to witness the work of zoo veterinarians and personally interact with a spotted seal was truly extraordinary. Seeing firsthand how wildlife medicine is practiced in a zoo setting reinforced my interest in veterinary conservation and inspired me to explore similar fields in the future.

Beyond academics, I took every opportunity to explore different parts of Hokkaido, creating unforgettable memories along the way. As an avid birdwatcher, I focused on visiting natural areas such as Kushiro, where I had the privilege of observing the Red-crowned Crane (Tancho). The conservation efforts in Japan have been remarkably successful, and seeing hundreds of cranes foraging in the fields of Tsurui Village was a perfect example of how conservation can benefit both wildlife and local communities. It was inspiring to witness a harmonious balance where nature, landowners, and eco-tourism coexist successfully.

One of the most unexpected yet exciting experiences came from a three-day trip with Minagisan and her high school friends. Thanks to their invitation, I was able to experience unique activities, such as riding an icebreaker ship while watching a breathtaking sunset over the frozen sea. Along the way, I encountered some of the world's most impressive birds, including the Steller's sea eagle (Owashi), the heaviest eagle species, and the Spectacled guillemot (Keimafuri), a seabird not found in my home country.

On the final day of our journey, we visited Kiritappu Cape, where I had the incredible chance to observe sea otters (Rakko) floating in the water, effortlessly cracking open shellfish as they drifted in the waves. The scenery was so stunning that it left me longing to return to Hokkaido in another season to experience its beauty from a different perspective.

This unforgettable seven-week journey would not have been possible without the kindness and support of Japanese students, professors, and program staff. Their hospitality made my stay in Hokkaido truly exceptional. I am deeply grateful for the experiences, friendships, and knowledge I have gained, all of which will undoubtedly influence my future as a veterinarian and conservationist.



From Kasetsart University

Parisuth Nualnok (Pakkard), 6th year

Studying at Hokkaido University (HU) has been an enriching experience, allowing me to gain valuable academic knowledge, explore cultural differences, and engage in new activities.

One of the most significant academic experiences I have gained at HU is working on a project involving CT scanning of polar bear and brown bear skulls for 3D printing. Additionally, I studied their anatomical differences, deepening my understanding of wildlife morphology. This exchange also introduced me to research processes, pathways for pursuing a PhD, and the latest advancements in veterinary medicine.

When comparing HU and KU, both universities offer practical learning experiences, but there are key differences. At HU, I worked in a veterinary hospital and learned different approaches to medication use. Infectious diseases are less common in Japan, whereas immune-mediated diseases are more prevalent. In contrast, infectious diseases remain a major concern in Thailand. This experience broadened my perspective on disease patterns and treatment approaches in different regions.



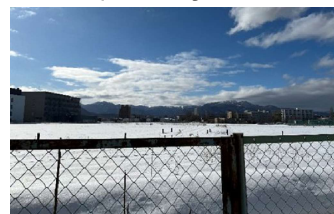
To further improve the exchange program, increasing field trips to explore various aspects of veterinary medicine beyond the university would be beneficial. Additionally, greater involvement for Thai students in the veterinary hospital would enhance their clinical experience and hands-on practice. Beyond academics, my time at HU has been filled with cultural and outdoor experiences. I visited Moerenuma Park for sledding, Jozankei for a foot bath, and attended the Snow Festival. In Otaru, I saw sea lions and finally got to see my favorite aquatic animal, a lumpfish, at Otaru Aquarium. I also explored Lake Toya, Noboribetsu Bear Park, and Hell Valley, each offering stunning landscapes. Additionally, I visited Maruyama Zoo and Hokkaido Shrine. At Asahiyama Zoo, I had the rare opportunity to touch a seal and learn about venipuncture sites for blood collection.

One of the most challenging but memorable experiences was skiing at Bankei. It was my first time, and balancing was difficult. By the end of the day, my legs were extremely sore, but it was a great experience. Lastly, I had the chance to join Milk and Cheese fair where had various Hokkaido dairy products such as milk, soft serve, cheese and desserts. I tried a lot of local Japanese food including soup curry, jingisukan, sushi, yakiniku and pork bowl. Overall, my exchange at HU has been extremely valuable. I have gained new academic knowledge, explored cultural differences, and engaged in unique experiences that broadened my perspective.

From Kasetsart University

Nathapatch Sanpamongkolchai (Tonkla), 6th year

My first experience in Hokkaido was quite different from what I imagined. Walking in snowy and slippery ground was very hard, even though I had prepared with proper shoes. Another difference was the shorter daylight hours, making it dark by 4 or 5 PM. After a week, everything was fine, and I was able to adapt. Despite these initial challenges, my exchange program in Hokkaido has been incredibly rewarding.



The academic knowledge I've gained, especially in toxicology, is invaluable. There are a lot of high technology instruments like the HPLC-MS/MS and ICP-MS, which I had only read about in articles. I saw and tried these instruments that have significantly enhanced my knowledge. I would like to thank Colin-san, all the professors, and everyone in the toxicology lab for their warm welcome and for sharing their invaluable knowledge. Additionally, I practiced many techniques like cell culture and Western blot, which I'd only learned from lectures before. The lab's research topics were quite different from those in Thailand, focusing on gene expression and utilizing advanced technology. This opened my eyes to new ideas for my further studies. Additionally, during my clinical rotation, I observed the unique approach of Japanese veterinarians, which, combined with Thai practices, can help me become a better veterinarian.

The cities I frequently visited were Sapporo, Odori and Susukino, which are vibrant but less crowded compared to Tokyo or Osaka. These cities have everything from shopping to delicious food, making them feel warm and inviting. I also visited Otaru, zoos, aquarium, Noboribetsu, and had the chance to attend the Snow Festival, where I saw amazing Pokémon sculptures like Pikachu, Regigigas, Kyukon, and Hogator, which was truly impressive for a Pokémon fan like me. Additionally, I had the chance to try Hokkaido's signature dish, soup curry, which reminded me of Thai soups and helped cure my homesickness. I also enjoyed Japanese food like katsudon, which my friends recommended from Seicomart. It was delicious, and I also tried other food like ramen and sushi. About trips my Japanese friends took great care of me. They organized trips to various places like Noboribetsu and invited me to dinner, where I tried Jingisukan for the first time and enjoyed Shabu Shabu that had a softer taste compared to what I've had in Thailand.

The most important factor that made this exchange program perfect was the support from everyone. I want to thank my friends: Mina, Takeru, Ami, Yuno, Moe, Marina, Shiori, Ayano, Rin, To and Yuko, as well as all my friends in Hokkaido. I'm also grateful to my Thai seniors, Mon, Jib, Noon, and everyone who provided invaluable support and guidance. A special thanks to Mike-sensei and Ericasan for coordinating activities and works. Lastly, I want to thank all the professors and staff, both from Kasetsart and Hokkaido, for making this program possible. Thank you all once again.



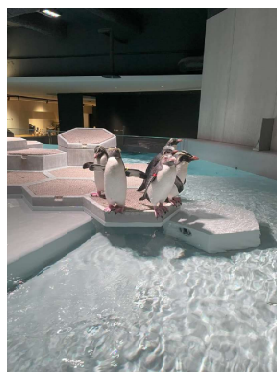
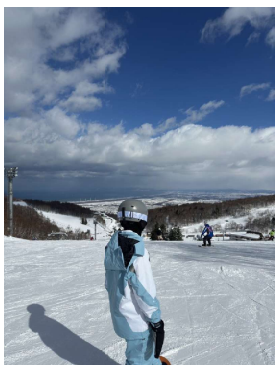
From Kasetsart University

Sarichaya Tongdeelert (Auey), 6th year

Before I came to Hokkaido, I thought that two months would feel like a long time, but once I got here, time just flew by. I've learned so much during my stay, and it's been really impressive. Most of what I've learned happened in the classroom, where we had the chance to visit different laboratories. It was fascinating to see the kind of research they're doing, and sometimes we even got to try experiments ourselves. Since it was our first time doing some of these experiments, we made a few mistakes, and the results were often confusing, but overall, it was a great learning experience.

Aside from studying, we spent a lot of time exploring food and desserts. Our Japanese friends were kind enough to recommend and take us to some amazing places to eat. We tried Jingisukan, soup curry, and shabu-shabu, and we also discovered some great spots near our dormitory. Sometimes, when classes ended early, we'd go for a sweet treat, like crepes or soft-serve ice cream. Even though the weather was freezing, we couldn't resist the milk soft-serve, and we enjoyed it despite sometimes shivering afterward! The fruits here were also fantastic, especially the strawberries and tangerines, which were sweet and juicy. Out of all the places we tried, one of the most memorable meals was at Toriton. We waited for two hours, but it was totally worth it because the food was fresh and delicious! We also visited several attractions, including a zoo and an aquarium. All the places we visited were fun, but my favorite was the AOA Aquarium. I didn't expect much at first since it's in the building, but it turned out to be really cool. The layout was great, and they even had penguins. The funny part is that I won a first-prize penguin plushie in a lucky draw, which was a little penguin. However, the one I got was three times bigger than the actual penguins and packing that plushie to take home turned out to be quite a challenge! Another highlight was snowboarding. I had never done it before, so it was a bit tricky at first. But once I got the hang of it, it became really fun. The next day, I was sore all over. Despite the pain, I would definitely do it again!

Overall, my two months in Hokkaido have been full of fun, excitement, and new experiences. I've learned a lot, enjoyed amazing food, and met really nice people along the way.



From Kasetsart University

Wattida Sathantip (Cookie), 6th year

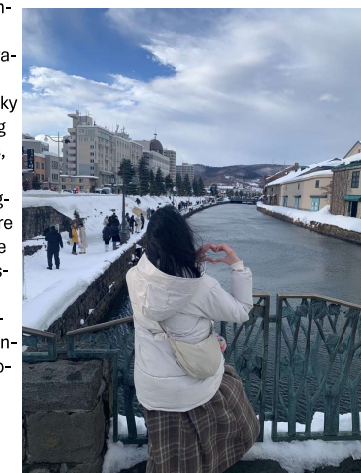
Over the past two months, I have had many wonderful experiences. This was my first time traveling abroad, and I finally visited Japan that is a country I had always dreamed of. I participated in the KU-JU exchange program in collaboration with Hokkaido University. During the first week of 2025, I attended online lectures with professors from Hokkaido University and Rakuno Gakuen University before traveling to Japan on January 11, 2025. The moment I stepped out of the airport, I witnessed snowfall for the first time. The weather in Sapporo was extremely cold completely different from Thailand which required some adjustment for Thai peoples like us. However, the breathtaking scenery made it all worthwhile. Everywhere I looked the city appeared clean, well-organized and aesthetically pleasing. The air was also fresh making my time here incredibly enjoyable.

Upon arriving in Sapporo, I began my studies at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Hokkaido University where I would be studying for a total of eight weeks.

During the first week, we were assigned to different labs based on our preferences. I chose the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases where I assisted in analyzing Bovine Leukemia Virus from bovine blood samples using ELISA and qPCR techniques. I was delighted to be part of this lab as everyone welcomed me warmly and guided me through the work with great dedication. For the next five weeks, we rotated through different labs within the faculty. And in the last two weeks, we attended classes at the Animal Hospital. Each day's activities varied depending on the subject. For example, in the Lab of Theriogenology, we studied Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) where we learned to pack embryos, perform embryo transfers into the cattle uterus, and later conduct embryo recovery to assess the results. Additionally, our professor took us on a field trip to Asahiyama Zoo where we observed various animals including seals and penguins which were the zoo's highlights. Furthermore, we had the opportunity to work in the faculty's animal housing facility where we administered vaccines and performed ultrasounds to check for pregnancy in pigs. We also conducted rectal palpation on dairy cows too.

Most other lab sessions consisted of lectures focusing on each lab's primary research topics. As for our clinical rotation at the Animal Hospital, we rotated through various units such as Medicine, Surgery, and Anesthesia, we observing and assisting with cases based on our interests or assigned duties for the day.

Beyond our daily studies we had the chance to visit many fascinating places across Hokkaido. One of the highlights was Moerenuma Park, a former landfill site transformed into a park featuring a glass pyramid museum. Outside, there was a large snow-covered hill where we enjoyed sledding which was incredibly fun. We also visited Maruyama Zoo which housed a diverse range of animals comparable to those at Asahiyama Zoo. Another memorable place was Hokkaido Shrine, the most revered shrine in Sapporo which I visited twice to pray and purchase lucky charms. Additionally, we explored Shiroi Koibito Theme Park, a charming chocolate factory and Otaru Aquarium, home to various marine species, a penguin parade and a dolphin show all set against a beautiful landscape. Nearby, we admired Otaru Canal, a romantic and popular photography spot for tourists. Another unforgettable trip was to Lake Toya where the stunning blue lake contrasted beautifully with the bright blue sky. We also visited Noboribetsu Bear Park that located on a mountaintop accessible by ropeway where we observed bears and even had the chance to feed them and Jigokudani Valley, we marveled at hot springs and breathtaking mountainous landscapes. Within Sapporo, we explored many iconic attractions and shopping districts, including Sapporo TV Tower, Sapporo Clock Tower, Odori Park, and Susukino Station.



However, my most cherished experience in Hokkaido was the trip to Jozankei Village, a small onsen town nestled in the mountains. I visited Jozankei Shrine, walked across Futami Bridge a striking red suspension bridge offering scenic river views and enjoyed a foot onsen in a public park. Soaking my feet in the warm onsen while surrounded by snowy landscapes was incredibly relaxing. Since I was in an onsen town I couldn't miss the opportunity to try a traditional hot spring bath. I visited Hoheikyo Onsen, one of the most famous in the area and experienced my first-ever full-body onsen bath. It was an incredibly soothing experience, allowing me to truly immerse myself in Japanese culture.

Another memorable experience in Japan for me was the food. I got to try many new dishes and found almost everything is delicious. Some of the most famous dishes in Hokkaido that I tried included butter corn miso ramen, soup curry, and Genghis Khan. It was my first time eating grilled lamb and I was surprised that it had almost no strong smell. Other dishes I enjoyed included Udon, Hamburg steak and Butadon. I think the rich flavors of Japanese cuisine combined with the soft and slightly chewy texture of Japanese rice made every meal incredibly satisfying. Aside from savory dishes, desserts were also a highlight. Since Hokkaido is known for its high-quality dairy products which are rich, creamy, and aroma. So the sweets here were exceptionally delicious. I especially loved Hokkaido soft cream for its sweet, milky and rich flavor. I also really enjoyed Hokkaido fresh milk. While staying here, I drank milk almost every day and had the chance to try different brands.

Being in Hokkaido allowed me to learn about Japanese culture through people, language, architecture and surroundings. I had the opportunity to participate in a Setsubun party, a traditional event marking the transition from winter to spring. We made our own sushi rolls and ate them while making a wish in a special direction and also took part in throwing beans at oni to drive away bad luck. I also joined the welcome party of my laboratory where I got to experience the Japanese way of hosting gatherings. Another memorable experience was trying on a kimono and walking around Sapporo. Wearing it involved many steps and was quite complicated but every detail was carefully arranged, making the final look incredibly elegant. Before returning to Thailand, I joined a ski trip with PhD students at Bankei which was my first time skiing. I started from the basics, learning how to put on ski boots, balance, and stop. I even tried skiing down a slope. Although skiing was physically exhausting but it was a lot of fun. If I get the chance, I would love to go skiing again.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the KU-JU Exchange Program possible including Hokkaido University, Kasetsart University and the supporting organizations such as IVEP and JASSO. Having the opportunity to participate in this program has given me wonderful friendships with both Thai and Japanese friends, invaluable experiences and knowledge that I could not have gained elsewhere and beautiful memories that I will cherish for a lifetime.

