

IVEP

Hokkaido University-Kasetsart University
International Vet Exchange Program 2025
Achieving Global Standards of Excellence in Veterinary Education



Student Report from
School of Veterinary Medicine,
Hokkaido University
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Project Managers
Kasetsart University
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Ayano TOISHI, 5th year

My two-month stay at Kasetsart University was an incredibly enriching and inspiring experience. Not only did I improve my English skills, but I also deepened my understanding of veterinary medicine and gained valuable insights by adapting to a culture and lifestyle different from Japan.

The program consisted of six main units, and in every unit, the instructors taught a wide range of topics—from basic techniques such as animal handling to more advanced practices like clinical examinations and farm consultations—all in English. In the Aquatic Unit and Exotic Unit, we learned about fish and shrimp management as well as the physical examination and treatment of raptors and turtles. Because such topics are rarely covered in Japan, we initially had very limited knowledge. Despite this, the instructors explained everything patiently until we fully understood, and they were always willing to answer our questions without hesitation. Their kindness and dedication left a strong impression on me.

Among all the units, the Bovine Unit—where I spent two weeks—provided the most profound learning experience. We accompanied veterinarians on daily farm visits, performed reproductive examinations, and observed surgeries. During visits, we were even allowed to conduct physical examinations ourselves and occasionally make decisions regarding treatment plans or antibiotic choices. This allowed me to apply everything I had learned in Japan and work with full commitment. In addition, because of the warm climate in Thailand, we encountered cases of anaplasmosis and piroplasmiasis—diseases that no longer occur in Japan. Observing blood smears of these infections was particularly exciting.



Fig 1 : Me drawing blood from a goat

Before the training, I had set a personal goal: to learn about dairy and beef cattle management in Thai farms. Through the busy and fulfilling two weeks in the Bovine Unit, I was able to accomplish this goal. Unlike Japan, Thailand is largely composed of small-scale farms. Every farm we visited had only about 10 to 20 cattle. The high year-round temperatures also make it difficult to raise Holsteins or Jerseys (*Bos taurus*). As a result, Thai farmers keep *Bos indicus* cattle—commonly known as zebu or humped cattle—or crossbreeds between *Bos indicus* and Holsteins. These cattle are smaller and produce less milk than Holsteins.

Due to these circumstances, many farmers struggle to earn sufficient income, and it is difficult for them to improve farm infrastructure or increase labor. Consequently, diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhea—both common and hard to manage—occur frequently, leading to higher antibiotic usage. Having previously observed only medium- to large-scale farms in Obihiro, seeing firsthand the challenges faced by small-scale farms in Thailand was eye-opening. I realized that effective infectious disease control must include preventive strategies that even small-scale farms can realistically implement; otherwise, fundamental improvement is unlikely.

Furthermore, I gained a clearer idea of my future goals. Before participating, I was simply interested in cattle medicine and farm management. However, the exposure to real-world challenges faced by Thai farmers—such as infectious disease control, heat stress, and limited resources—made me aware of the global scale of veterinary issues. I began to think more seriously about the roles veterinarians can play internationally, whether in disease prevention, public health, or improving production systems in developing regions. I am now more motivated to build the skills and knowledge needed to contribute not only within Japan but also beyond its borders.

Outside of academic activities, spending time with Kasetsart University students and graduates—sharing Thai meals and traveling together—became cherished memories. The Thai students were incredibly kind. They drove us to various places despite their busy schedules and often brought small gifts, breakfast, or drinks when we met. Their warm hospitality deeply moved me, and they taught me what it truly means to be kind to others. I hope to carry forward their spirit of thoughtfulness in my own actions. In addition, I was deeply moved when a Thai student generously shared stories about her family traditions and future dreams. Through these conversations, I was really happy that she shared such deep and personal stories with me, and I realized that, despite differences in language and background, students pursuing veterinary science share a similar passion and sense of responsibility. This sense of camaraderie gave me strength on challenging days during the program. One of the most memorable experiences was snorkeling in the Similan Islands. The Similan Islands are known for their stunning coral reefs and world-class diving spots. Since I did not have a diving license, I decided to try snorkeling instead. The seawater was incredibly blue and clear—beautiful enough to move me even before I began swimming. As I floated above the reefs, I was able to see many brightly colored fish, which made the experience even more enjoyable. The highlight, however, was unexpectedly encountering a sea turtle nearby and having the chance to swim alongside it. It felt like an unbelievable stroke of luck.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Rattikarn, the professors and students at Kasetsart University, Professor Katagiri and the faculty at Hokkaido University, Ms. Kawashima, and all the Hokkaido University and Rakuno Gakuen University students who shared these two months with me. This program was far more than an academic training opportunity—it was a transformative experience that helped me grow as an aspiring veterinarian and as a person. The friendships I built, the clinical experiences I gained, and the cultural lessons I learned will stay with me for the rest of my career. I am truly grateful for the chance to participate in this program, and I look forward to applying everything I learned as I continue my journey in veterinary medicine.



Fig 2: The beautiful ocean of the Similan Islands



Fig 3: With my favorite friends

Takuma GOTO, 5th year

I joined a two-month clinical practice at Kasetsart University in Kamphaeng Saen, located about 1.5 hours from Bangkok, Thailand. We stayed there from mid-September to mid-October, during the transition from the rainy season to the dry season. We were told that the temperature was becoming milder; however, it still felt hot and humid to us. Our program consisted of a clinical rotation through six units. We had opportunities to learn about large animals (e.g., swine and ruminants) as well as areas that are less familiar to us, such as aquatic animals and exotics. In the first week, we studied swine medicine. Through farm visits and necropsies, we learned a variety of topics including farm management and major diseases. Among the necropsies, a case of PRDC (porcine respiratory disease complex), which presented as fibrinous polyserositis with abundant fibrin deposition on the epicardium, pleura, and peritoneal serosa (fig 1. Fibrinous pericarditis), was most memorable to me. In the second and third weeks, we studied fish and shrimp management. Although the schedule was demanding, with numerous farm visits, we learned many concepts in aquaculture. In the fourth and fifth weeks, we studied mainly bovine diseases in the ruminant unit. We encountered several infectious diseases that are problematic in Thai farms. Due to the hot and humid climate, blood parasite infections were common, and we had several opportunities to observe them. In the sixth week, we learned basic medical techniques in the exotic animal unit (e.g., rabbit restraint, raptor physical examination, and drug administration in turtles). I was also lucky to observe an elephant case, which made the week particularly memorable. In the seventh week, we studied pathology basics including necropsy, immunohistochemistry, and PCR. In the last week, we observed several equine infectious diseases (e.g., habronemiasis and trypanosomiasis). A case of surra was especially impressive as we were able to observe live, motile organisms on a blood smear (fig 2. *Trypanosoma evansi*).

One of my goals for this practice was to learn about infectious diseases that are rare in Japan. I was particularly looking forward to joining the pathology unit because pathology is my favorite field. In this unit, we studied blood parasites, avian necropsy and sampling, histopathology, immunohistochemistry, and PCR for diagnosis. For the blood parasite practice, we first observed eight demonstration slides to study the morphology of eight parasite species (e.g., *Anaplasma*, *Babesia*, *Theileria*, *Trypanosoma*, *Leucocytozoon*, *Plasmodium*, *Haemoproteus*, and *Microfilaria*). We then tried to identify infectious agents from blood smears of clinical cases. I found that *Anaplasma*, *Theileria*, and *Babesia* share similar morphology, making differentiation challenging. We then confirmed the species by PCR, which revealed that many cases involved co-infections, further complicating on-site diagnosis. This was a valuable experience, as we rarely encounter such cases in Hokkaido.

Avian necropsy was one of the most memorable parts of this exchange program because I could learn a technique that was new to me. In standard avian necropsy procedures, we cut the ribs to remove the sternum and expose the heart and lungs. However, this method often damages the air sacs, making observation difficult. This time, we learned that by cutting the sternum longitudinally and opening it to both sides, the air sacs could be observed more clearly (fig 3. Chicken necropsy, air sacs are easily observed). Through the necropsy, we also learned how to collect samples for cytology and bacterial culture. As we usually do not perform cytology during necropsy in our lab, it was valuable to learn the appropriate sampling technique. They also emphasized the importance of considering the budget, as farmers need to pay for diagnostic tests. In some cases, cytology is sufficient for diagnosis and much easier and more rapid than histopathology.

We also had the opportunity to study histopathology, including slides of lumpy skin disease and pythiosis. We learned classical histological features for lumpy skin disease (e.g., ballooning degeneration of keratinocytes, intracytoplasmic inclusion bodies), which was also found in Japan last year. We also saw a gross image from a horse

infected with *Pythium*, a filamentous organism, showing a large granuloma with ulceration on the skin. Since I was not familiar with this disease, studying real histological examples was particularly meaningful to me.

We performed immunohistochemistry for hexon antigen in liver sections from chickens with IBH (fowl adenovirus infection). We also discussed how we could improve the staining by adjusting the conditions. I was fortunate to observe histological slides for several cases, which was especially enjoyable for me (fig 4. IBH, basophilic intranuclear inclusion bodies).

Last year, I participated in the IVEP program and spent one month in the animal hospital at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. I studied small animal medicine there, so it was especially meaningful for me to learn about large animals during the rotation at Kasetsart University. Aquatic animals and exotic animals were particularly unfamiliar to me, and I felt fortunate to have the opportunity to study them in the program. Through this two-month stay, which was the longest I have ever spent abroad, I also became more familiar with Thai food and culture. Thailand and Japan have differences in food, culture, environment, and climate, which sometimes made daily life a bit challenging; however, we spent a fulfilling and meaningful time thanks to the delicious food and the kindness of the people we met. I would like to express my gratitude to all the instructors who supported the program, the students with whom I spent these two months, and everyone who helped us in Thailand.

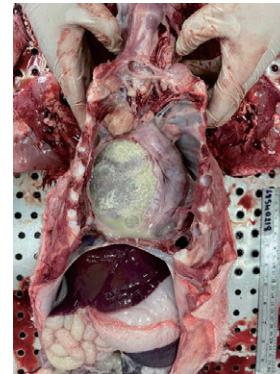


fig1: fibrinous pericarditis

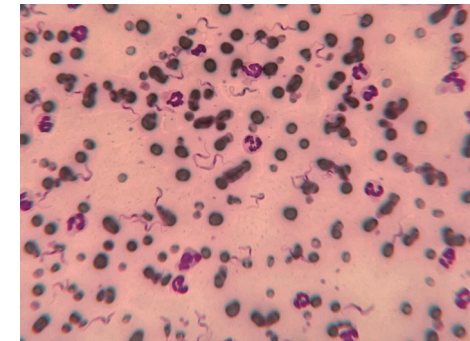


fig2: *Trypanosoma evansi*



fig3: chicken necropsy

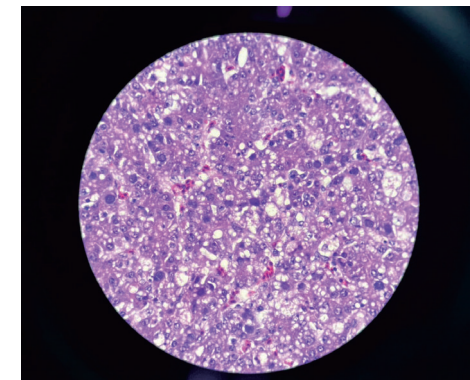


fig4: IBH

Moe DOI, 5th year

The most memorable part of my stay was the Exotic Unit. During the one-week rotation, I spent three days observing clinical cases at the hospital and two days at the Wildlife Unit, where I encountered a wide range of species—from elephants standing nearly three meters tall to turtles as small as three centimeters.

At the hospital, I mainly observed clinical examinations and surgeries, and learned various handling and restraint techniques for exotic species. Most of the cases brought in were injured or ill wildlife and pets, with turtles, fighting cocks, and squirrels being particularly common.

The university animal hospital where I trained is located in Kamphaeng Saen, an area rich in greenery with abundant wildlife, yet also heavy traffic. As a result, many of the wildlife cases we saw were related to road accidents. After treatment, these animals are released into quiet, low-traffic areas within the campus.

In some cases, wildlife require more than a year of continuous treatment. The cost is generally covered by the person who rescued the animal, but when this is not possible, the veterinarians or veterinary nurses sometimes take responsibility and cover the expenses themselves.

During the two days at the Wildlife Unit, I observed clinical procedures for raptors, as well as anesthesia and treatments for deer and an elephant.

In the raptor unit, we were able to experience hands-on wildlife medicine that we rarely encounter in Japan, including capturing a rescued kite, performing physical examinations and blood collection, and administering subcutaneous vitamin injections. A variety of rescued raptors, such as eagles and owls, were being cared for at the facility.

The following day, we assisted with anesthesia and medical procedures for deer kept on the Kasetsart University campus in preparation for their transfer to another farm. Among a herd of more than 30 deer, we identified the target individuals, delivered dart injections accurately, induced anesthesia, and transported them out of the paddock. To prevent dehydration during transport, we administered IV fluids, along with vitamins and mineral supplements for overall health. Working as a four-student team, we divided our tasks—IV injections, anesthesia monitoring, subcutaneous injections, and intramuscular injections—and performed the procedures efficiently within the limited anesthesia window.

In the afternoon, we visited a temple near Bangkok to observe an elephant medical examination. The patient was a 50-year-old male standing about three meters tall. His sheer size was both exciting and a little intimidating. Unlike Japan, elephant medicine in Thailand is conducted in a direct-contact manner. Although students participated from behind two protective barriers, the hoof treatment still felt very tense and demanded great care.

Through this training program, I gained many insights into the relationship between people and animals in Thailand. As mentioned earlier, at the Exotic Unit, many wild animals are brought in by members of the public who have rescued them on their own. It was refreshing to see people bring in turtles or squirrels injured in traffic accidents, pay for their treatment, and continue to care for them afterward.

In the Bovine Unit, I also learned that injured beef cattle are sometimes treated even to the extent of performing limb amputation, and that cattle on their way to slaughterhouses may be reclaimed by charity groups and taken to temples. These are situations that would be difficult to imagine in Japan. Through these experiences, I was reminded

of the diversity of values toward animals and gained insights that will be highly valuable in my future career as a veterinarian.

Before this program, I had already been considering a career in large animal veterinary medicine, but this experience strengthened that intention even further. In Japan, most of the cattle I encountered during practical training were healthy animals kept on well-managed, hygienic large-scale farms. In contrast, in Thailand, I was able to observe a wider range of cases involving cattle raised under more diverse environmental conditions, which I found extremely interesting.

I also learned an important concept from a professor in the aquaculture field in Thailand: the policy for food-producing animals, “Effort that matches what you want to gain.”

This means that whether farmers carefully raise expensive juveniles for high-value sale, or choose inexpensive stock and provide only minimal care for low-cost production, the economic efficiency can be the same; neither approach is inherently superior. This was a completely new way of thinking for me. It led me to realize that even if a farm appears to have suboptimal management by Japanese standards, improvement is not always necessary as long as the management does not compromise animal welfare and is appropriate for that farm’s operational goals. This was a significant insight for me.

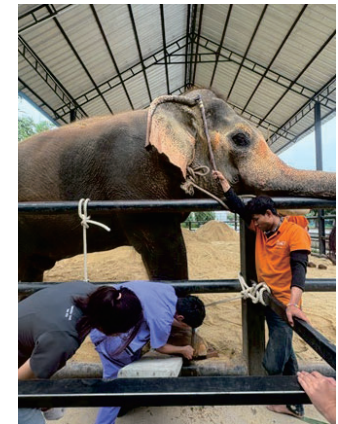
Lastly, all of the classes and practical sessions in this program were specially designed for Japanese exchange students. I was able to learn so much thanks to the tremendous support from Dr. Narut, Ms. Rattikarn, and many other faculty members, veterinarians, and staff.

I am also deeply grateful to Professor Katagiri and Associate Professor Yanagawa from the Department of Theriogenology, Associate Professor Hiono from the Department of Microbiology, Lecturer Sunaga from the Department of Surgery, Ms. Kawashima from the administrative office, and Mr. Mike, who guided my presentations. The support from previous exchange students and local students also played a major role in ensuring that I could spend eight weeks safely and stay fully focused on my studies.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved.



△ This kite was rescued with fractured primaries.



△ Hoof management of the elephant. Students work from outside the enclosure for safety.

Tohshiroh YAMAGUCHI, 5th year

I would like to report on my experiences during the Kasetsart University exchange program. This was the longest program within IVEP, lasting eight weeks, and enabled me to study a broad range of topics in industrial animal studies. I gained valuable experience in learning about infectious diseases not found in Japan and husbandry practices unique to Thailand. I would like to focus my report on the Aquatic Animal Unit, where I studied topics rarely covered in Japanese veterinary programs.

<Aquatic Animal Unit>

This unit covered numerous topics, including fish and shrimp aquaculture management, transport management, sample collection, and water quality examination methods. At Hokkaido University, while we learn about shrimp and fish diseases through lectures, there are few opportunities to study other aspects, making this experience invaluable. Below, I report on the specific content learned during this unit.

First, aquaculture management methods vary widely depending on the objectives and target species. Among these, the management practices at the giant tiger prawn breeding farm particularly impressed me, so I will describe them in detail. Giant tiger prawns are edible species of prawn, with males being preferred for their larger body size. This farm uses a technique to ensure that all prawns born are male. They perform surgery on one-month-old male juvenile prawns to induce feminization. The sex chromosomes of prawns are ZZ in males and ZW in females. Therefore, through surgery, females possessing the male genetic makeup (ZZ) – known as neo females – are created. Breeding these with males (ZZ) ensures offspring with ZZ sex chromosomes (males) are produced. The surgery specifically refers to the removal of the androgenic gland, an organ producing male hormones located on the ventral side of the prawn. This prevents the suppression of feminization that normally occurs in males, resulting in feminization.

In transport management, I learnt about the transportation of ornamental fish. It was fascinating to discover how packing methods differ depending on whether fish are transported by plane or by car. Furthermore, I was impressed and struck by the realization that even in transport, various ingenious methods are utilized. These include keeping fish at low temperatures to reduce their metabolic rate, conserve oxygen and energy, and enable them to endure long transportation periods.

Samples were collected from both shrimp and fish. For shrimp, blood sampling was performed using two methods: drawing blood directly from the heart and collecting it from the blood vessels running alongside the ventral nerve cord. Fish blood was drawn from the dorsal aorta located below the spine. In addition to blood sampling, gills, fins, and mucous membranes were collected for microscopic examinations to test for infections such as parasites and bacteria. Trichodinia was actually observed.

Regarding water quality management, we conducted actual examination of the water quality in the growth-out ponds for the White leg shrimp. Specifically, we tested pH, alkalinity, total ammoniacal nitrogen, salinity, and nitrogen dioxide using test kits and other methods. During this process, we also learnt how abnormalities in these parameters affect aquaculture and how to prevent abnormal values, thereby deepening our understanding of aquaculture management.

< Campus life >

During my stay at Kasetsart University's Kamphaeng Saen campus, I lived in the International Dormitory, where daily life was comfortable and enjoyable. The pond in front of the dorm was beautiful, and looking at it whenever I came home always helped me relax. For lunch, I often ate at the White Canteen. When I joined the Bovine Unit on farm visits, the staff kindly took me to many different restaurants, allowing me to try a variety of Thai food. In the evenings, I usually went to the campus markets. Large markets were held on Mondays and Wednesdays, and on other days the

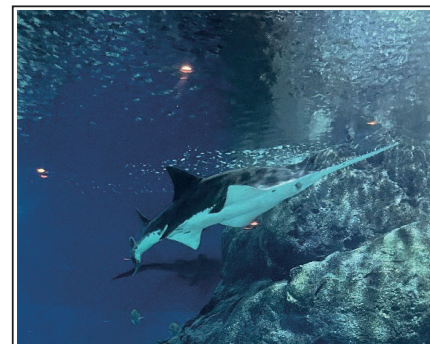
Green Tent next to the Orange Canteen was open. My favorite food stall was in the very back row of the Green Tent, where they cooked omelet pad Thai right after you ordered. It was always hot, fresh, and delicious. These two months gave me a small but meaningful look into the daily life of Thai students. It was a great chance to enjoy the campus atmosphere, meet friendly people, and experience the food culture at Kamphaeng Saen.

<Trip>

During the weekends, I had many opportunities to travel, and one of the most memorable experiences was a trip to Bangkok with both Thai friends and fellow Japanese students. Together, we visited Sea Life Bangkok, one of the largest aquariums in Southeast Asia. The exhibits were beautifully designed, and I was impressed by the wide variety of aquatic species, from tropical fish and jellyfish to large rays and sharks. Walking through the long underwater tunnel was a memorable experience, as it allowed us to observe marine animals up close in a calm and immersive environment. Visiting Sea Life with friends from different countries made the trip even more enjoyable, and it became a valuable cultural experience that deepened our friendship. It was a refreshing break from academic activities and allowed me to appreciate another aspect of Thailand's unique and vibrant culture.

<Acknowledgements>

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the faculty members of Kasetsart University, Hokkaido University, and Rakuno Gakuen University who cooperated with this program; to the administrative staff of both universities who handled the procedural matters; to my friends at Kasetsart University who supported my life there; and to my fellow students at Hokkaido University and Rakuno Gakuen University. I was able to participate in this program despite the exchange student quota being already filled, thanks to the exceptional arrangements made for me. I extend my profound gratitude once more to the staff at Kasetsart University who made an exception to increase the number of exchange students, and to the staff at both universities who worked so hard to make this possible. I realize this involved many irregularities not seen in previous years, and I am truly grateful for your flexibility in accommodating these irregularities. I also express my deepest gratitude to those involved with the Hokkaido Future Challenge Fund at the Hokkaido Government, who provided financial support for this exchange. I shall endeavor to contribute to society by applying what I have learned during this exchange. Thank you very much again.



The shark at Sea Life Bangkok



Omelet Pad Thai in the Green Tent

Noriko UWAI, 5th year

Looking back on the wonderful 8 weeks in Thailand, I'd like to write specifically about the Swine Unit and my personal impressions of this program.

- Swine Unit

This unit was composed of lectures, a necropsy, and a field trip to a swine farm. In the lectures, we gained basic knowledge of the Thai swine industry and farm management. It was our first time studying swine production in such depth, and acquiring new knowledge in English was an exciting experience. As for the necropsy, we were informed of the client's complaint and allowed to dissect some piglets by our own hands, beginning with euthanasia. We were fortunate enough to observe a range of lesions-including pericarditis, pleuritis, peritonitis, splenomegaly, lung consolidation, gastric ulcer, and enteritis. Based on the client's complaint and necropsy findings, PRDC (Porcine Respiratory Disease Complex) or a diarrheagenic *E. coli* infection was suspected in some cases. At a large pig farm outside campus, we witnessed and understood the whole production flow from heat detection and artificial insemination to farrowing, nursery, and fattening. It was our first time seeing a commercial swine farm, and everything I saw was new to me. The animals appeared healthy, housed in clean, well-lit pigpens with sufficient ventilation. What I found most interesting at the farm was its cooling facility, which utilizes the heat of water vaporization. One side of the pen features a zigzag wall, where water slowly runs down from above and evaporates by fans. On the other end, huge fans suck air, creating a one-way airflow in the pen for both ventilation and cooling. They told us that this efficient (but a bit expensive) cooling system can improve average daily gain, increasing the profit in the long run. Not only that, but the evaporative cooling system can minimize the risk of pathogen invasion from outside because it's a semi-closed system with no wide windows for air exchange. I'm glad we learned about a practical way to manage heat stress in the tropics, since it's a major issue not only in Thailand but also in Japan and other countries. Although we did not encounter any cases of African Swine Fever, we were required to provide negative PCR results for the virus before visiting the farm, which reminded us of the seriousness of ASF in Thailand.

- Giving presentations

Every Friday, we gave a presentation (either a unit summary or a case study) for each unit. Preparing for a presentation in such a short period was challenging, but teamwork made it possible. I can't say I was satisfied with the presentations I delivered, but the entire process from preparation to answering questions was deeply educational. Even when I thought I had no questions in lessons, once I started making slides, questions kept popping up one after another: "Why did they administer this antibiotic?" "How can I differentiate this disease from that?" During the presentation session, the professors asked us many questions and enriched our understanding by providing further information on what we learned that week, such as the prevalence of certain diseases in Thailand, various treatment options, and species-specific management strategies. At times, they corrected our misunderstanding. These intensive learning experiences taught me never to accept what textbooks say without questioning their basis. In addition, they often asked us, "What about in Japan?", which made me realize the importance of knowing my own country.

- Thai life and people

People in the veterinary faculty were so responsive to our questions, explaining whatever we wanted to know. Unfortunately, we didn't have a chance to take a class with Thai students this year, but they warmly kept in touch with us during our stay, taking us to many nice restaurants and tourist spots. Some of the Thai foods they recommended

became our real favorites: Thai BBQ called "mookata", shrimp with tamarind sauce, among others. Some Thai cuisine was deadly spicy, but that is one of my pleasant memories. I'm looking forward to returning the favor when they come to Japan. Apart from that, though it was only in the final week, a Hungarian student joined us. It was so much fun and enlightening to casually discuss the differences between veterinary medicine in Thailand, Japan, Hungary, and other Western countries.

Beyond the university, the Thai public was remarkably kind and friendly to us, despite the fact that some of them couldn't speak or understand English at all. For example, when I was hurrying to the classroom on foot (because I mistakenly left my bicycle at a bus stop), a total stranger on a motorcycle spoke to me in Thai and gave me a ride!

Every weekend, we made quick trips to so many amazing places around Thailand. Bangkok downtown, Ayutthaya temples, Cha-Am beach, Chiang Mai city, Doi Inthanon National Park, Khao Sok National Park, Khao Yai National Park, and Erawan National Park are all unforgettable. Kasetsart University itself was also abundant in nature and wildlife, where we could see gigantic monitor lizards, colorful birds, fireflies, squirrels, and adorable stray dogs; though we had to be cautious about rabies.

- Studying veterinary medicine abroad

This might just be my personal bias, but we Japanese tend to hesitate to speak English, being afraid of making trivial mistakes. In contrast, the most impressive thing about Thai people's English was that they seemed to speak English confidently without worrying about grammar. This experience reinforced my belief that trying to make yourself understood in simple English is important, even with some errors. And of course, over the 8 weeks, we learned many English terms in veterinary medicine. The words and knowledge I got in real-world contexts are hopefully stuck in my head.

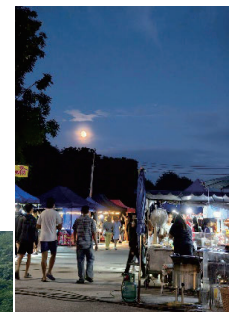
Throughout the program, I kept feeling my lack of veterinary knowledge and skills, as well as my English proficiency. This experience will keep me motivated for years to come to grow into a veterinarian with an international perspective. We truly enjoyed this once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity, all thanks to those involved in the program. I can never thank them enough.



Dinner on the Chao Phraya river



Kayaking on Cheow Larn lake



Night market on campus

Taro FUJINO, 5th year

To begin with, I am truly glad to have returned home safely after spending about two months in Thailand. During this program, I completed practical training in six different units over eight weeks, each of which offered valuable learning experiences. In this report, I would like to focus on the Equine Unit, which left the strongest impression on me. Since becoming an equine clinician has long been one of my future goals, I had especially been looking forward to this part of the program.

In the Equine Unit, we mainly worked with hospitalized and first-visit patients, practiced various clinical examinations and treatment techniques, and took part in a field visit to a riding club. In dealing with hospitalized and new patients, we encountered a wide range of cases such as laminitis, pneumonia, omphalitis, and rectovaginal fistula. I had the opportunity to closely observe physical examinations and treatments performed by the veterinarians, and in some cases, we were even allowed to participate in the examinations ourselves. Among the cases, what impressed me the most was a suspected case of surra (*Trypanosoma evansi* infection). Based on the horse's symptoms - such as fever and jaundice - and blood test results, surra was suspected, and under the microscope we were able to observe the actively moving parasites in the blood sample. Since surra has never been reported in Japan, it was extremely valuable to see both an actual clinical case and live parasites with my own eyes.

For the training in clinical examination and treatment techniques, we practiced physical examinations, abdominal and cardiac ultrasonography, injections, and nasogastric tube insertion. I found the abdominal ultrasound practice especially memorable. We learned about the FLASH method (fast localized abdominal sonography), a widely used technique for diagnosing colic, and then applied it to real horses. Although I had learned a part of it in lectures at my university, this was my first time handling the probe myself on horses and interpreting the images. Through this hands-on experience, I clearly understood why the FLASH method is so widely used: clearly defined scanning points allow for consistent images and enable veterinarians to assess major abdominal organs quickly and efficiently.



Practical training of FLASH method

During our visit to a riding club in the suburbs of Bangkok, we studied lameness evaluation, stable management, and some research conducted there by the professor. We observed the horses' trot and discussed with the professor which limbs were affected. At times, the opposite limb appeared to move abnormally, which made me realize how challenging lameness observation can be. The stables were well maintained, with spacious 4x4 m stalls equipped with ceiling fans and air conditioning. The stalls were kept clean, and the horses always had access to feed and water. I was impressed by the management practices that reflected a strong consideration for animal welfare. For research, the professor explained to us about his laboratory's research on the effects of bedding on horses' behavior. They mainly use 3 devices for their research: the belt sensor for detecting the motion and heart rate of a horse, the monitoring cameras for checking horse's sleeping habit, and the dust sensor for detecting the air quality, temperature and humidity of the stable. Also, they use 3 types of bedding for research: straw, paddy rice and no bedding. For the time being, little has been discovered about the impact of bedding on horses, and I obtained a hope that this research might enable us to improve the health of horses in the future.

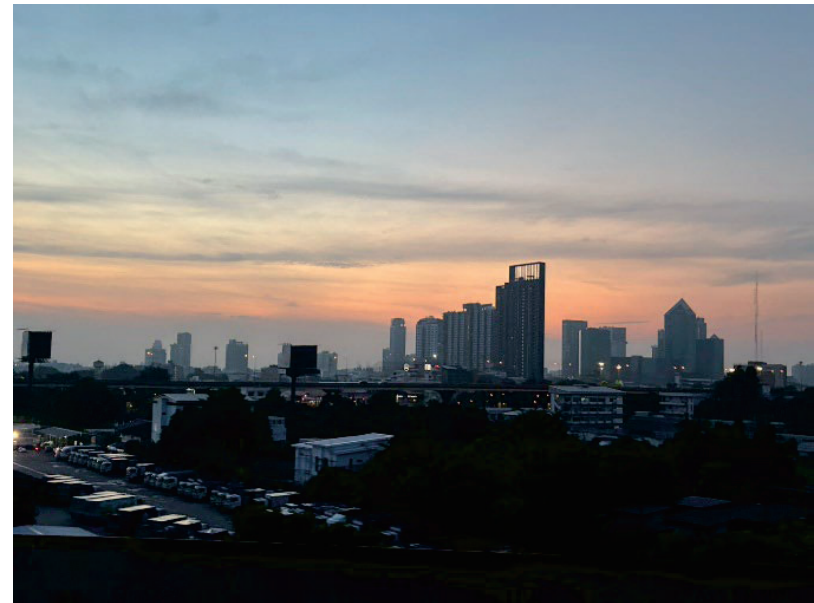
Through this training, I gained exposure to cases that cannot be seen in Japan and was able to observe equine management practices unique to Thailand. Also, I was able to practice various kinds of clinical examination skills,

many of them for the first time. The training was precious for me to deeply understand the mechanism and the importance in the clinical fields. These experiences strengthened my motivation to further develop my skills and knowledge in equine medicine. I am determined to make the most of what I learned in the Equine Unit and continue making efforts toward my future goals.

On my days off, I traveled around Thailand almost every week. I visited cities such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Kanchanaburi, and Surat Thani, and enjoyed the nature of national parks such as Erawan, Khao Yai, and Khao Sok. I rode an overnight train from Chiang Mai to Bangkok for the first time, saw Muay Thai with Thai friends in the Rajadamnern stadium in Bangkok, saw many wildlife such as elephants and porcupines in Khao yai national park, and even rode a horse on Cha-am beach – these are the experiences that have become unforgettable memories for me.

Over these two months, both on campus and during my travels, I was able to appreciate the warmth of Thai people, the diversity of the food culture, and the richness of the country's nature and wildlife. Especially, I was impressed the most by how polite Thai people are. Even though I was a stranger from a foreign country and could not understand Thai, every Thai person was willing to communicate with me, supporting me in every aspect. From daily life, practice to trip, my stay in Thailand became full of precious experiences thanks to all the supports. Moreover, the knowledge and experiences I gained through the training have inspired me to further develop my skills and someday contribute as a veterinarian on an international level. In the near future, as a veterinarian and a more matured person, I eagerly hope that I will come back to Thailand and meet all the people I met this time again.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the professors, international section staff, and students at Kasetsart University; the professors and staff at Hokkaido University; my fellow classmates who shared these two months with me; and everyone else involved in this program. Thank you very much.



Dawn in Bangkok, from night trains

IVEP

Hokkaido University-Kasetsart University

International Vet Exchange Program 2025

Achieving Global Standards of Excellence in Veterinary Education



Student Report from Kasetsart University

January 13th to February 27th 2026

Project Managers

Kasetsart University

Professor Seiji KATAGIRI

Laboratory of Theriogenology, Hokkaido University

From Kasetsart University

Pattanit Panthaworn (Gift), 6th year

My exchange experience in Japan has truly been one of the best experiences of my life. I almost did not get the chance to join this program, but somehow fate led me here, and I am endlessly grateful for that.

Studying at Hokkaido University opened my eyes in so many ways. One of the first things I noticed was the difference between the education systems in Japan and Thailand. Here, I spent much more time working in the laboratory and gained hands on experience that I had never had before. Research is strongly emphasized, and being in this environment made me realize that this could truly be the right place for my future studies. Clinical rotations at the animal hospital were also different from Thailand. The veterinarians here do not take too many cases each day, which allows them to spend meaningful time teaching students. Students are encouraged to perform many procedures themselves, tasks that would normally be done by veterinary nurses in Thailand. I believe this hands on approach helps students become more skillful and confident, both in performing procedures and in communicating with animals and their owners.

However, coming to Hokkaido was not only an academic journey. It was also a journey of life. I learned about Japanese society and its deep respect for rules and time. People live simply, yet meaningfully. I had the chance to try many kinds of Japanese food, some that I had tasted in Thailand before and others that were completely new to me. Honestly, eating Japanese food in Japan feels different. It carries emotions and atmosphere that make each meal special. Although there were moments when I missed Thai food, Japanese cuisine always brought me happiness. Nature in Hokkaido became a part of my daily life. I walked thirty minutes to class every day, and along the way I observed the scenery changing around me. White snow covering the ground and bare trees standing quietly may seem simple, but to me they were beautiful every single time. Nature could also be harsh. During my first week, I experienced a snowstorm. I was frightened as my shoes sank into the snow, the freezing wind hit my face, and walking became extremely difficult. My umbrella was useless against the strong wind, and all I could do was keep moving forward until I safely reached my dormitory. When I finally arrived, I felt proud of myself. I realized that I was stronger than I had thought. I also had the opportunity to explore many wonderful places, including Otaru, Maruyama Zoo, Noboribetsu, and areas around Sapporo. Each place had its own unique character. Some made me feel calm and peaceful, others excited and joyful, and some simply made me laugh. I am grateful for every place I visited and every memory created there. One experience that stands out clearly in my heart is skiing at Rusutsu Ski Resort. I had always wanted to try snowboarding, but for my first time I chose skiing instead. It was exhausting and I fell many times. My body felt sore and I realized how little physical strength I had. Yet at the same time, I felt incredibly alive. In those moments, I was fully present. Skiing made me understand how much I enjoy physical activities and how alive I feel when I move my body. I truly hope that one day I will have the chance to ski again, or perhaps finally try snowboarding.

Most importantly, I will never forget the people. The professors and doctors at Hokkaido University, also Kawashima san and Mike, were incredibly kind and supportive. Despite the language differences, they always tried their best to teach us, guide us, and help us solve problems. I am deeply thankful for their patience and generosity. The Thai seniors made my stay much less lonely. Being able to speak my own language sometimes, being invited to meals and activities, and feeling cared for meant more than I can express. My Japanese friends were also a precious part of this journey. From the first day when I struggled with heavy luggage until the day I left, they were always there to help, to translate, to invite me to dinners and takoyaki parties, and to make me feel welcome. Even though we spent only two months together, I feel incredibly lucky to have met them.

Two months may not seem like a long time, but these two months have changed me in the best possible way. I can now see more clearly the person I want to become in the future. I am grateful for every experience and every

person I met. I truly hope that one day our paths will cross again.

Hokkaido, I will carry you in my heart. ♡



From Kasetsart University

Akira Burns, 6th year

Participating in the exchange program at Hokkaido University (HU) was a meaningful and enriching experience for me, both academically and personally. During my time at HU, I had the opportunity to observe different aspects of veterinary education and research while working in several laboratories and visiting the veterinary hospital. Through laboratory rotations in fields such as microbiology, veterinary hygiene, public health, and theriogenology, along with several other subjects, I was able to gain practical experience and see how research is conducted in a highly organized academic environment. These rotations allowed me to observe different laboratory techniques, participate in discussions, and understand how scientific research contributes to veterinary medicine and animal health. Observing clinical work at the veterinary hospital was also very interesting, as I could follow veterinarians in different departments and learn about complex cases and advanced procedures. Seeing how specialists approach diagnosis and treatment helped broaden my understanding of clinical veterinary practice.

One of the most interesting aspects of the exchange program was comparing HU with my home university. At HU, there is a strong emphasis on research and laboratory work, and students are often encouraged to actively participate in practical activities. This hands-on environment helped me gain a deeper understanding of the subjects we studied. In the veterinary hospital, the referral-based system means that many cases are complicated and require specialized knowledge. Because the number of cases per doctor is relatively lower, veterinarians are able to spend more time discussing cases and explaining their clinical reasoning to students. At my home university, the caseload is often higher, which creates a faster-paced working environment. Both systems provide valuable learning opportunities, but the teaching style at HU allowed students to analyze cases more thoroughly and learn about advanced diagnostic and treatment approaches.



Beyond academic learning, the exchange program also provided many memorable non-academic experiences. Living in Hokkaido during winter was something completely new for me. I experienced heavy snowfall for the first time and learned how to adapt to the cold weather while commuting to campus and exploring the city. I also had the chance to travel to several places around Hokkaido, such as Otaru and Noboribetsu, and experience winter activities like skiing. These experiences allowed me to appreciate the natural beauty of Hokkaido and gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and daily life. Trying local Japanese food, visiting traditional hot springs, and spending time with friends from different countries were also highlights of my stay.

For future exchange programs, organizing even more opportunities for interaction between exchange students and local Japanese students could further strengthen cultural exchange. Activities such as group events or informal gatherings would allow students to share experiences and learn more about each other's cultures. Overall, this exchange program was an incredibly valuable experience that contributed greatly to my academic development and personal growth. I am very grateful for the kindness and support from the professors, doctors, and friends I met during my time at Hokkaido University, and I will always appreciate the knowledge and memories gained from this opportunity.

From Kasetsart University

Sirinya Pathomjaroensukchai (Toon), 6th year

Studying abroad as an exchange student was something I had never imagined I would have the opportunity to experience in my life. However, I was fortunate enough to finally come and study at Hokkaido University in Japan. This opportunity has become one of the most meaningful and unforgettable experiences of my life. Living and studying in another country allowed me to step outside of my comfort zone and see the world from a new perspective.

During my time here, I had the chance to learn about Japanese culture and the daily lifestyle of people in Japan. Everything felt new and exciting. Studying at Hokkaido University also gave me the opportunity to experience the Japanese education system and learn directly from professors and experts in various fields. The supportive environment and opportunities for hands-on learning made the experience even more meaningful. As part of the program, we rotated through different departments such as Microbiology, Anatomy, Toxicology, Veterinary Public Health, and Theriogenology. Although working in laboratories could sometimes be challenging, I truly enjoyed the experience. Learning about new research topics broadened my perspective and allowed me to develop my knowledge further, opportunities that undergraduate students in Thailand may not always have the chance to experience.

Another valuable part of this program was learning at the university animal hospital. I truly felt that the hospital was an excellent place for learning. We followed veterinarians during their work and closely observed how they handled different clinical cases. I also had the chance to observe complex surgeries, such as orthopedic and kidney surgeries. In addition, I was able to see advanced medical technologies and hospital systems that are different from those in Thailand. Beyond academics, joining this exchange program also gave me the opportunity to explore the city and visit many wonderful places. I traveled to Otaru, visited the zoo, and went to Noboribetsu to experience the famous onsen, as well as exploring areas around Sapporo. Meeting people from different backgrounds and spending time with friends created many wonderful memories filled with laughter and good moments together.



This program helped me grow both academically and personally, just as I had hoped when I first decided to apply. I learned how to adapt to new situations, communicate with people from different cultures, and become more confident in myself. Everyone I met during my time here was incredibly kind and supportive, and I truly appreciate their care and generosity. Even though we spent only a short time together, I could feel the genuine friendship that we shared.

This exchange program has given me unforgettable memories, new friendships, and valuable lessons that I will carry with me throughout my life. I feel deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here and experience such a special and inspiring time in my life. These two months were truly worth the decision I made, and if I had the chance to choose again, I would still come here without hesitation.

From Kasetsart University

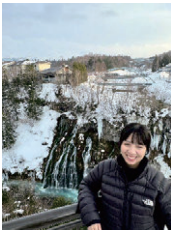
Samineekarn Maneenate (Few), 6th year



The exchange program at Hokkaido University has provided me with a truly enriching experience and a wealth of knowledge, both from lectures and laboratory work. It also allowed me to observe clinical activities at the Hokkaido University Teaching Animal Hospital. In addition, I had the opportunity to choose a host laboratory, and I selected the Wildlife Biology and Medicine Laboratory. During my time there, my professor assigned me a research project on the comparative morphology of four bear species: the polar bear, brown bear, Asiatic black bear, and sun bear with different feeding behaviors. For this project, I designed the study myself, including determining which parameters of the bear skulls should be measured. I conducted the skull measurements, analyzed the data, and prepared the final presentation independently. This experience allowed me to go through the entire research process from study design to data collection and presentation, which made my exchange program both comprehensive and deeply meaningful.



When comparing this experience to studying in Thailand, I feel that the learning approaches are quite different. At Kasetsart University, the focus is mainly on clinical practice and developing hands-on skills. In contrast, Hokkaido University places a strong emphasis on research. This approach highlights the importance of research in generating new knowledge, offering fresh perspectives, and contributing valuable insights to the field of veterinary medicine. Personally, I believe this exchange program is already excellent. I had the opportunity to rotate through different laboratories and observe clinical work at the teaching hospital, which broadened my academic perspective. If I could suggest one improvement, it would be that the time spent at the hospital could include more opportunities for hands-on activities. I think gaining more direct practical experience would make the program even more valuable. Beyond the academic experience, I also had the chance to explore many beautiful places in Hokkaido. I visited the Big Buddha, Furano, Biei, Asahikawa Zoo, the Otaru Aquarium, Otaru Canal, and the charming shopping streets in Otaru. I also enjoyed visiting the Hokkaido Jingu Shrine and relaxing at Jozankei Onsen. One of the most memorable experiences for me was bathing in an onsen, especially an outdoor onsen. The weather was extremely cold, but soaking in the warm water while surrounded by nature was an incredible feeling. It was my first time experiencing an onsen, and for someone from Thailand, it felt very new and unforgettable. I also truly enjoyed Japanese culture and cuisine. From sushi and ramen to curry and soup curry, everything here is delicious, and the seafood is incredibly fresh. I have come to love Japanese food very much during my time here. In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank Hokkaido University for their support, as well as the JASSO scholarship for making this exchange program possible. I feel extremely happy and deeply grateful for the warm welcome I received here. I truly hope that one day I will have the opportunity to return again.



From Kasetsart University

Lakhanabut Komchum (Fah), 6th year

Participating in the exchange program at Hokkaido University (HU) has been one of the most refreshing and transformative experiences of my life. Over the course of the program, I was given the incredible opportunity to expand my veterinary knowledge through hands-on practice while deeply immersing myself in the unique culture of Japan.

Academically, the curriculum at HU was diverse and intensive. We rotated through various specialized laboratories, including microbiology, veterinary hygiene, public health, and theriogenology. In the theriogenology lab, I practiced assisted reproductive technologies, such as oocyte pick-up and embryo transfer in cattle. A challenging process but we all were having fun with that challenge. Furthermore, my clinical rotations in the veterinary hospital were truly eye-opening. I followed doctors in internal medicine, oncology, and orthopedics, observing surgical procedures like a TPLO, laparoscopic spay surgeries, and ureteral stent placements.

A notable difference between my home university and HU is that the HU veterinary hospital operates strictly on a referral basis. This system ensures a lower caseload per doctor, allowing students to study each complex case in remarkable depth alongside experts. We also visited a newly built infectious diseases research complex, learning about global "One Health" initiatives and cross-border viral transmission.

Beyond academics, my time in Japan was filled with vibrant cultural experiences and adventures. I fully embraced the freezing but beautiful Hokkaido winter by skiing at Rusutsu, braving heavy snowfalls for city walks, and visiting the fantastic Snow Festival. Food became a central part of my cultural immersion and a way to bond with new friends. I challenged myself to finish a level-30 spice soup curry at SAMA, savored fresh sushi at Hanamaru, Katsusen, Toriton and experienced the warm, welcoming atmosphere of local izakayas. We even had a Takoyaki party where we learned about regional cooking styles. Taking time to relax in traditional sentos and the Hoheikyo Onsen provided much-needed rest after long study weeks. Exploring beyond Hokkaido, I traveled to Osaka to visit Universal Studios Japan and explored the fascinating historical exhibits at Meiji-mura in Nagoya.

This exchange program has profoundly impacted my personal and professional growth. I learned to navigate cultural differences, adapt to unexpected challenges, and build lasting international friendships. I got huge support from so many people the professors, doctors, and my wonderful friends were incredibly kind and always ready to help me. Whether it was receiving guidance during complex laboratory experiments or getting help when I needed to carry 40 kg parcels through the snow, the community at HU was always there for me.

I am returning home with plenty of veterinary knowledges, collection of unforgettable memories, and appreciation for cross-cultural collaboration.

