

.....Wildlife Veterinarians Can Use Years of Experience to Qualify for ACZM Boards

The American College of Zoological Medicine (ACZM), an international specialty organization recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), represents four practice disciplines including: aquatic animal medicine, captive wildlife (zoo) medicine, wildlife population health, and zoological companion animals. There are two pathways candidates can use to meet the training requirements to take the ACZM board certification examination in one of the four disciplines. One pathway is completing a traditional 3-year ACZM compliant residency (there are currently 24 such residencies, with approximately 12-15 open positions per year available). But, there is currently only one ACZM compliant free-living wildlife residency in North America. ACZM-compliant residencies are at: <https://www.aczm.org/> and click on 'become an ACZM diplomate'.

The second pathway is the 'Experiential Route' and it applies to all ACZM disciplines. It allows 6 years full-time work experience in the relevant area to count the same as a 3 year residency. Think about it!! Working full-time as a wildlife veterinarian for 6 years can count the same as taking a 3-year zoological medicine residency. Most of residencies focus on clinical and individual animal care, as opposed to wildlife populations and management. Working for wildlife non-profit conservation organizations or in academic wildlife programs, and relevant graduate level course work, may also help you meet the relevant experience requirement.

The Experiential Route is one way ACZM is trying to improve both the training opportunities for wildlife population health-oriented candidates, and the relevance of that training to free-living wildlife. Other requirements needed to credential for the ACZM board examination include: a DVM or equivalent degree, having two ACZM diplomates that serve as mentors during the training period, and a minimum of 3 first author publications relevant to the field in refereed journals. Candidates that successfully credential and pass a 2 part examination achieve board certification. Further details can be found on the ACZM website (<https://www.aczm.org>). If you have specific questions regarding the Residency or Experiential Routes as applied to wildlife population health you can contact info@aczm.org.

Reasons to consider becoming an ACZM diplomate:

1. Receive mentorship from experienced specialists in wildlife population health and management
2. Achieve certification of excellence that is globally recognized by zoological and wildlife agencies and institutions
3. Build a fulfilling career dedicated to advancing knowledge and techniques related to wildlife medicine and health.
4. Train future zoological and wildlife veterinarians to grow and sustain the field for generations to come
- 5.

Additionally, most academic teaching positions at North American veterinary schools strongly encourage board certification. ACZM boards are a preference for many zoo jobs, particularly those with ACZM-compliant residencies, and the process and achievement of board certification may open doors for employment in more diverse areas in zoological medicine.