



Dr. Gordon volunteers her veterinary services at Charlie's Food Bank in Vancouver.

Want to be a veterinarian when you grow up?

We caught up with the BC SPCA's senior manager of animal health, Dr. Emilia Gordon, to ask her about being a vet, volunteering at Charlie's Food Bank and the time she helped a kitten named Braveheart.



When did you decide you wanted to be a veterinarian?
When I was eight years old, I realized there was such a thing as a "doctor for animals." I had always loved animals and science, so this intrigued me. As I learned more, I fell in love with veterinary medicine and never looked back.

What do you do at the BC SPCA?

As Senior Manager, Animal Health at the BC SPCA, my main

job is to help our 36 animal shelters with their animal health needs. This includes making protocols for vaccinations and medications to help keep animals healthy, as well as training staff and doing community work.

If you had pets growing up, can you tell us about one memory that sticks out for you?

My first pet was a neighbourhood cat who "adopted" my family. My sister and I used to make friends

with all of the cats. We would often wake up to a cat meowing outside the window, asking us to come out and play.

Can you tell us a little bit about your professional background?

I went to vet school at the University of California, Davis. While I was there, I volunteered at shelters and with a free clinic for pets with homeless guardians. I knew I wanted to learn more about nonprofit work



and use my training to support the most vulnerable families in the community.

You volunteer at Charlie's Food Bank. What is that all about?

Charlie's provides free pet food and basic veterinary care to pets whose guardians are homeless or struggling in other ways and can't go to a regular vet clinic. These pets are well cared-for and have an amazing bond with their guardians. It's so important to help them stay healthy.

What's your favourite part of your job?

I love getting to visit our different shelters and communities and meet both people and animals. My favourite thing is when an animal with special needs finds a wonderful home. British Columbia is an amazing place to live, full of caring people!

Is there one case that sticks out in your mind?

There are so many interesting cases in shelter medicine! One I remember really clearly is a little orange kitten named Braveheart. He came in orphaned and with ringworm, a contagious skin condition. Despite his challenges, he purred all throughout his vet

exam. Once he was treated, he found a wonderful home.

What is the most unusual animal you've helped?

When I worked in a shelter in California, I got to help treat a sick snake who had been abandoned at the shelter. Shelter vets get to help take care of all different kinds of animals!

What keeps you excited to do your job every day?

There are so many exciting and challenging things about my job. I love knowing I am helping animals in our shelters stay healthy and find homes. The most exciting thing is the idea that, moving into the future, we can do community work to help animals stay out of shelters!

What is one piece of advice you would give kids who want to make a difference for animals?

There are so many ways to start! Companion, farm and wild animals need us to speak for them. Whether you start with kids camp, volunteering or writing letters to the newspaper or elected officials, please start somewhere. The animals need you!



As a veterinarian, Dr. Gordon helps keep animals healthy with regular check-ups.



Veterinarians like Dr. Gordon help many different types of animals.



Dr. Gordon loves to spend time with her dog, Jake! Here they are snowshoeing last winter.



Your career path... to becoming a veterinarian

- ✓ Graduate high school
- ✓ Up to four years of university science studies with excellent grades
- ✓ Volunteer experience with a variety of animals in a veterinary clinic and other animal settings (e.g. animal shelter, farm, wildlife rehabilitation centre)
- ✓ Good communication and organizational skills
- ✓ Four-year Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree (DVM)
- ✓ Pass North American Veterinary Licensing Exam (NAVLE)

