



Dr. Caitlin Fletcher started her journey on a dairy farm in New York and now spends her days on the self-described “postcard farms” of central Kentucky. The warm spring days in the rolling hills of Lexington are a far cry from the seemingly never-ending winter days of northern New York. Caitlin grew up on a small dairy with her parents, brother and sister; this is the place where Dr. Fletcher first decided she would become a veterinarian. She also knew she would attend Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. As a teen she spent her free time riding along with the mixed animal vet in her hometown, gaining experience for her future career.

While completing her Animal Science degree at The University of Findlay in Ohio, she applied to Cornell, and was rejected. In hindsight, she says this was the best thing that could have happened to her. Unsure of what to do after graduation, she recalled a field trip to Lexington as part of an equine reproduction course during which she had visited several of the Thoroughbred farms. She remembers being amazed and impressed with how beautiful and well run they all were and being introduced to KEMI (the Kentucky Equine Management Internship.) With urging from a close friend who had previously completed the program, Caitlin applied for KEMI and was accepted. She then spent 6 months living and working on a Thoroughbred farm and learning more about the industry, and knew she had found her passion here.

Pre-doctor Fletcher spent her days going from farm to farm, meeting the owners, trainers and managers, as well as working directly with many veterinarians. Dr. Rocky Mason was most influential as a mentor in showing Caitlin the ins-and-outs of life as an ambulatory equine veterinarian. Once KEMI ended, Caitlin worked as a technician at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute. Here she was exposed to the advanced care associated with a hospital setting and began to develop a strong interest in internal medicine. She reapplied to Cornell during this time and was accepted into the Class of 2014.

Caitlin’s time in vet school was a fast-paced blur of learning and growing. She headed back to Kentucky after graduation for an intern position at Hagyard. During the first few months of the internship Dr. Fletcher was partnered with more senior veterinarians and did her best to absorb everything they had to teach. Having countless doctors and nearly 30 fellow interns around was a blessing. The knowledge base at her disposal was unparalleled, she could always discuss cases with other doctors and describes the overall support as contributing to her growth and never feeling alone. She recalls her first official solo call, about 3 months into the internship, a colic in the middle of the night; during that time she found herself thinking “I’m a real doctor now”.

Dr. Fletcher now works as a Field Care Veterinarian at Hagyard where her professional

interests include internal (especially neonatal) medicine and reproduction. She never has a “typical” day, and describes the breeding season of January to June as her most hectic time. Caitlin believes that the blend of traditional horsemanship and farm management with the front-line medicine practiced is one of the reasons that being an equine veterinarian in central Kentucky is so unique and rewarding. When asked if she would choose this profession again she responded with “absolutely!” “Even with all the things that had to go wrong to get me here, I wouldn’t change a thing.” One thing that Caitlin thinks is an advancement in the profession is encouragement of a healthy lifestyle. Dr. Fletcher has colleagues regularly encourage her to keep after work plans like dinner with friends and staying active doing things other than just being a doctor.

Dr. Caitlin Fletcher is an Ambulatory Veterinarian at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute, to get more info visit www.hagyard.com You can also visit her on the [Hagyard YouTube Channel](#).

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