



Dr. Amanda Borchardt, Veterinarian

Employer: Northern Harvest Sea Farms NL Ltd., St. Albans, NL

Where are you from?

I am from Creighton, Saskatchewan. It is a small town similar to St. Alban's, NL but ~400km northeast of Prince Albert, SK.

What is your background?

I received my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) from the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). In addition to the aquaculture medicine taught at UPEI, I did external rotations (short work terms) in my fourth year of studies under aquaculture veterinarians in Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Thailand, and Canada (B.C. and NL).

What does your job entail?

This is the first question people ask me when I tell them that I am a fish vet. I think people have a general understanding of the direct work that I do – going out to sites to check on the fish, performing necropsies (autopsies for fish), diagnostic testing, etc. But what I think a lot of people don't realize is that my job extends far beyond the hands-on work that I do. Fish health plays a key role in every part of this industry, so a large part of what I do involves reviewing and/or advising on standard operating procedures, protocols and other documents for our company – from animal husbandry, to biosecurity, to broodstock programs. In addition, I interact with federal and provincial groups to ensure that our company is following fish health regulations.

How does this position relate to the aquaculture industry?

Aquaculture veterinarians have their fingerprints all over this industry. They can be found in the field/private sector, governments, diagnostic laboratories, feed companies, academia, research & development and pharmaceutical companies.

What is the most interesting thing you have ever experienced in this position or while working in the aquaculture industry?

Wow! How do you pick one thing? Aquaculture in Newfoundland is so young compared to other sectors, so to be even a small part of the team that is involved in researching

and expanding our industry is very exciting. I literally am learning something new every day.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

The most challenging part of my job is coming to a diagnosis. The clinical signs of many fish conditions can look the same – whether it's bacterial, viral, or environmental. Of course there are diagnostic tests that can help out, but sometimes we don't have the luxury of waiting for those results to come in. It is my job to compile as much information as I can – from the site crew, the divers, the weather, and from my site visit, to narrow the list down to a few most likely conditions. That way I can hopefully recommend some husbandry changes that the site crew can implement while we're waiting for those diagnostic results to come in.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

By far the most rewarding part of my job is knowing that I have made a difference to the health or welfare of our fish. Having someone tell me that a recommendation I gave helped our fish or lowered our mortality rate is very satisfying. After all, that's why I became a veterinarian in the first place – to help animals.

What would you recommend to someone (i.e. a young student) who might be interested in this field of work?

I would say to try and get a summer job in the aquaculture sector to feel out the industry and make sure it is where you want to work. And then after that, study hard – good grades are necessary to get into veterinary school. ✨



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