

# From dog food taster to eel ecologist: six jobs that are surprisingly enjoyable

If you're dreading the return to work after the holidays, you could be doing one of these jobs instead. Six people talk about their unusual work, and the job satisfaction that comes with it.

The first Monday of January is probably prime-time for feeling glum about work: it's ages until the next holiday, it's dark in the morning and when you get home, and it's still quite a long time until pay day. And if you're stuck in a job you don't like it could be enough to have you reaching for your CV.

But before you start hunting through the job ads, try to put things in perspective. So what else could you be doing instead? We asked six people doing some unusual jobs how much they are paid, what the worst parts are and why they enjoy their work.

## Dog-food taster

**The job:** Tasting dog food to make sure it meets a premium brand's exacting quality standards.

**What it involves:** Opening sample tins of each freshly made batch of dog (or cat) food, smelling it and eating it. "Although dogs' palates are different to ours, taste is an important quality check to ensure each different ingredient is perfectly balanced in just the right way," says Philip Wells, the chief taster for Lily's Kitchen pet food. "Trying the food is also a good way to pick up on the nuances of the cooking; this works especially well on the dry kibbles."

**Typical salary:** £20,000 for an entry level job in the quality department. However, Wells says £50,000 or more is "easily achievable" for an experienced technical director who, as well tasting products, is also likely to be responsible for developing new recipes and advising the business on technical and regulatory matters.

**Worst part of the job:** The deadlines, for Wells, who admits he quite likes the food. The meat used in pet food has to be derived from animals passed as fit for human consumption, under the Animal Feed Regulations 2010, and he says the firm uses "human-grade freshly prepared raw food" in its recipes. He adds: "There are some pretty gruesome pet foods out there and although I don't taste them, the smell is enough to turn the stomach when I do a bit of market research."

**Job satisfaction:** "No two days are ever the same." It's rewarding, Wells says, that a project he has worked on will "help pets to become happier and healthier". However, he acknowledges that some of the credit must go to another "key member" of the tasting team: Lily, the border terrier.(...)

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