LIVESTOCK—Idaho internships let students explore vet careers in livestock industry

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WITH THE VETERINARY PROFESSION anticipating future shortages of 5 to 10% in food-animal veterinarians and 25% in mixed animal practitioners, UI CALS Animal and Veterinary Sciences faculty Chris Schneider and M. Wayne Ayers prescribed a remedy: a six-week, paid summer internship on Idaho dairy and beef operations and in large-animal veterinary practices for their Washington-Idaho Regional Veterinary Medical Education students.

Launched with four interns in 2008, the Idaho Bovine Veterinary Experience Program (IBVEP) expanded to 15 in 2009 with funding from the United Dairymen of Idaho, Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Pfizer Animal Health.

Dairyman-mentor Mike Roth of St-Ellen Farms in Jerome says IBVEP “helps the university and dairy farmers. It’s just so neat to see these kids who are so intelligent, energetic, and enthusiastic. They’re the best of the best, and we get to keep them in agriculture.”

IBVEP intern Gus Carreon of Marsing was assigned to Nampa’s Stewart Farms in 2008 and shadowed Herd Health veterinarian Rob Dey in 2009. “It really motivated me towards dairy veterinary medicine,” Carreon said.

Eighty percent of today’s vet students are females—urban or suburban. Schneider wants today’s students to realize the potential financial and professional rewards of becoming food-animal veterinarians. With six-figure salaries, they would work within complex animal-management systems to keep entire herds healthy, rather than focusing strictly on the sick.

Katrina Chew, a Bay Area native and second-year veterinary student, loved the “thinking on your toes” opportunities the internship provided. “The best way to learn is to just go out there and get your feet wet,” she said.

Schneider and Ayers hope IBVEP becomes a template for early experiential training of veterinary students nationally. They also plan to beef up its beef component, in which second-year veterinary student Chelsey Johnson was their pioneer. Johnson spent an “awesome” internship at the UI Nancy Cummings Center north of Salmon, learning about “cool” studies in grazing intensively and under center pivots.

Students to judge Twin Falls area dairies

CONTACT AMIN AHMADZADEH at amin@uidaho.edu

SOME 50 STUDENTS from the West’s six major university dairy education programs will gather in Twin Falls March 4 to 6 to apply their training to real-world management issues in Idaho dairies.

This year’s Western Regional North American Intercolligate Dairy Challenge (NAIDC) will determine which students attend national NAIDC in Fresno, Calif. University undergraduates from Idaho, Washington, California, South Dakota, and Alberta, Canada, will apply what they’ve learned in classrooms as teams visit large dairies to identify issues and recommend changes.

Participating dairies benefit because final student reports are judged on their recommendations on ways each dairy can be more efficient and profitable. This challenge allows students to hone their skills as future dairy industry employees by applying classroom lessons to production management.

Students evaluate all aspects of a dairy, from labor and environmental management to livestock nutrition, said Amin Ahmadzadeh, Moscow, UI CALS associate professor of dairy science and event co-organizer with Reagon Hatch of Twin Falls. “This is where they bring everything together,” said Ahmadzadeh.

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New feed-intake system enables new research near Salmon

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THE NANCY M. CUMMINGS Research, Extension, and Education Center near Salmon went high-tech this fall with a new GrowSafe® nutrition facility and a state-of-the-art cattle working unit. The GrowSafe feed-intake and behavior-monitoring system uses identifying information in cattle’s electronic ear tags to automatically measure how much feed each animal removes from a feed bunk.

Purchased in part through an EPSCoR grant, the system supports a USDA-funded project by UI animal scientist Rod Hill to measure the genetic influence of feed efficiency in sires on carcass traits and desirable feedlot performance in their offspring.

Superintendent John Hall says the system will also be used to study feeding behaviors in cows and calves, evaluate the reproduction-related effects of feed efficiency in mother cows, and investigate the best feeds for weaned steers.

In addition, it’s one of only two such systems in the nation that can measure performance-related water intake.

“It creates a lot of opportunity for us to do things we typically wouldn’t be able to do without substantial student labor,” says Hall.

THE NEWEST research and extension center in the UI’s system—Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension, and Education Center (NMCREEC)—is on a beautiful grassland site just north of Salmon on U.S. 93. Land from the former Hot Springs Ranch was gifted to the University of Idaho from the Auen Foundation between 2000 and 2005. The center’s 1,044 acres are now owned by the UI Regents. Most of the original 150-cow research herd was donated by Idaho ranchers.

Currently, 450 of the center’s 850 irrigated acres are in alfalfa/grass hay, with the balance in pasture or forage test plots. All hay fields are grazed during different seasons, and all of today’s 340 cows and 60 replacement heifers are used actively in research each year.

Income from cattle sales—to feedlots via public auctions and to other research projects within the university—provides about 85% of the center’s operating funds, including some salaries. NMCREEC also supplies cattle to the Vandal Boosters’ Steer-a-Year scholarship program.

State-funded staff include a superintendent-beef specialist, farm manager, and three other employees. A 12-member advisory board provides input into the center’s research and extension programs.

Research. The center offers university faculty and students opportunities for unique research on irrigated pastures, automated production data acquisition, water quality-conservation, and on-ranch energy generation. Its unequaled combination of location, natural resources, research animals, and personnel enables a wide range of research directions and possibilities. Multi-disciplinary research under development includes range management, economics, and environment.

The center continues to expand its role in veterinary and graduate student education and in providing an exceptional setting for such in-depth, educational programs for ranchers and resource managers as the University of Idaho Advanced Ranch Management School.

MAJOR PROGRAMS
• Interaction of beef nutrition and reproduction
• Beef reproductive management
• Irrigated pasture systems

CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS
• Estrous synchronization systems for beef cows and heifers
• Use of sexed semen in commercial beef operations
• Annual forages for extending the grazing season
• Impact of selection for efficiency on productivity of beef cattle
• Beef production systems for the Northwest

COLLABORATORS
• Idaho Beef Council; Idaho Cattle Assn.
• Lemhi County Cattle/Horse Growers Assn.
• USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; UI Caine Center
• WSU College of Veterinary Medicine
• ABS Global; Norbrook, Inc.;
• Novartis Animal Health

EXPLORE CALS WEBS
www.extension.uidaho.edu/animals.asp

LINK TO IDAHO-SPECIFIC RESEARCH ON EVERYTHING FROM MINIMIZING DAIRY ODORS TO RANCHING IN HARMONY WITH THE LAND—MOST WRITTEN BY UI EXTENSION STAFF.