



DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES

# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026

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## We're hiring!

Research Assistant

Professor, Meat Sciences

Beef Cattle Specialist/  
Assistant Professor

## Academic year winds down



**H**ello there!! Hope everything is going well. Today is April 12, and after several inches of snow a few days back, it seems like we are now close to spring!! Is it too early to say this? Many

people have already told me, "Please wait, do not get too excited; the weather can change in a heartbeat."

It has been two years since we restarted the departmental newsletter, which provides you with information about what is going on in the department and introduces you to some of our great students, staff and faculty. We are approaching graduation, which is very exciting for everyone in the department. We certainly look forward to joining our graduates at this special time. Congratulations to all graduates and their families, teachers and advisors.

In this issue, we highlight the Animal Nutrition and Physiology Center (ANPC). It is one of our prime research centers, where our faculty, students and staff apply their knowledge and experience toward scientific success, solving issues and improving the livelihoods of animals and humans. Check out the great information about the ANPC.

This year, we commemorated the 100th Little I! What a fantastic time we had, with many alumni joining the event, sparking many conversations and memories. Taiton Axtman reflects on this event in his article.

As Jacob Klaudt indicates, March was an active and productive month for the NDSU Livestock Judging Team, highlighted by extensive travel and strong competitive experiences across Texas. Numerous industry stops enhanced

learning, including visits to ranches, feedlots, universities and companies. Beyond competitions, efforts focused on outreach and recruitment. Activities included supporting state 4-H and FFA contests, connecting with alumni, securing livestock for training, publishing articles, and engaging with youth groups. Recruitment efforts yielded a new commitment and additional prospective student meetings.

The 2025–2026 NDSU Equestrian Team is made up of 40 student-athletes representing nine states and Canada, spanning 18 academic majors across campus. This talented and dedicated group delivered an outstanding season, dominating the region in overall points. The team earned both the Zone 7 Region 3 High Point Hunt Seat Team and High Point Western Team titles, while senior Hannah Strong was named the region's High Point Western Rider. Twenty-one riders advanced to postseason competition in late March. Eleven western riders competed in the semifinals at Murray State University in Murray, Ky., while 10 hunt seat riders qualified for the semifinals at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Across both disciplines, NDSU riders represented the university with excellence against strong national competition. Their success does not stop there: Two NDSU riders will continue their postseason journey at the IHSA National Championships in Mill Spring, N.C., in early May. Sophomore Josie Schieno of Dickinson, N.D., will compete in Beginner Horsemanship, and Hannah Strong of Rolette, N.D., will compete in the High Point Western Rider division, riding in both horsemanship and reining phases. Best of luck!!! Enjoy the rest of the spring and have a wonderful summer. See you around.

Best regards,  
Guillermo

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# 100th Little 'I' is event to remember

## Students honor Shepperd's vision

by Taiton Axtman  
Little "I" Manager

This year marked a major milestone for NDSU's Little International, as students hosted the 100th annual show inside Shepperd Arena. What started as a small livestock event in 1923 has grown into the university's largest student-run show and the longest-running event on campus.

The theme for the 100th Little "I" was "Living Shepperd's Vision," honoring the event's founder, John H. Shepperd, and the generations of students who have carried on his mission. More than 150 contestants and many more committee members and supporters put in countless hours to raise funds, prepare the arena, organize competitions and ensure everything ran smoothly.

The Little International continues to be a unique experience because it focuses on showmanship rather than ownership. Contestants are randomly assigned animals, often outside their area of experience, and judged on their ability to handle and present livestock.

The two-day event began with the annual banquet, where the Agriculturalist of the Year was recognized for his contributions to the industry and promotion of animal agriculture. This year we celebrated Jim Kirsch, a longtime research technician in the Department of Animal Sciences. More than 400 people attended, including many students, alumni, our congresswoman and our governor, who permanently declared the second week of February as statewide Little "I" Week. The following day, Shepperd Arena was filled with spectators as students competed in beef, sheep, goat, dairy and swine showmanship, along with other events that showcased their skills outside the ring.

Beyond the competition, Little "I" is about the people who make it happen. From committee members and superintendents to emcees and volunteers, the event is entirely student-led, which is a big part



Above, a class of hogs enters the arena being herded by the royalty team. At left, some of the people who made Little 'I' a success, including grand champion Bailey Kunz of New Salem, N.D., holding the sheep.

of what has kept it going for 100 years. While the show builds animal husbandry skills, it also gives students real experience in leadership. This year's event was made possible by the hard work of 27 chairs, who strengthened their ability to communicate, lead, act professionally, and solve problems when things didn't go as planned.

For many students, Little International is more than just a show, it's where they find community, develop leadership

skills, and build connections that last long after college. Whether participants grew up in agriculture or are experiencing it for the first time, the event brings students together with a shared purpose.

As the night came to a close and the lights went down on the 100th show, the arena may have emptied, but the impacts of the Little International have left us all full.

One hundred years later, Shepperd's vision is still alive.

# Grad student activities enliven department

Animal Science Graduate Student Organization (ASGSO) members have been involved with many events lately including a department holiday food drive competition, Carnivore Catering events, member get-togethers, and research presentations at conferences.

The holiday food drive competi-



tion: grad students vs. faculty vs. staff, was a success. Graduate students won, and in total, the department donated over 200 items to the Goods for the Herd food pantry.

The department Christmas party had a great turnout and was an exciting night with festive trivia. A poll of the department revealed a top request for next year is to bring back the white elephant gift exchange.

In February, Carnivore Catering added Jacob Arntzen, Meat Lab assistant manager, as a second advisor and co-chair to help with planning and organizing events.

In March, a new ASGSO executive board was voted in, including Shelby Sullivan as president, Charles Bunker as vice president, Jada Riley as secretary, and Imtiaz Ali as treasurer.

— Katrina Kratzke, president



Above, ASGSO members show their spirit at the department holiday party, which they organized. At left is a table full of donations raised during the food drive competition.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Aaron and Jessi (Lagein) Subart



### What was your field of study at NDSU?

We both majored in animal science. Jessi also had minors in agribusiness and equine science.

### When did you attend?

August 2014 to December 2017. We both graduated in 3.5 years.

### What are you doing nowadays?

We have three sons: Easton, 7, Carson, 5, and Hudson, 3. We raise about 275 cow/calf pairs and farm about 1,500 acres with Aaron's father growing wheat, canola, flax, soybeans and silage corn. Aaron is an AI technician with ABS. Jessi works part-time on the farm and ranch and part-time at First Security Bank in Robinson as an ag/commercial loan officer.

### What is one of your favorite classroom/campus memories?

Jessi: Some of the more memorable mo-

ments were on the Wellness Center basketball court, at FarmHouse Fraternity and the Arthur barn dances.

Aaron: My highlights at NDSU were working at the beef barn, living at FarmHouse Fraternity and meeting other students in my animal science classes.

### What did you learn at NDSU that has helped you the most in your career/life?

Jessi: I learned that it's not what you know, but who you know. The relationships built with peers and professors will get you farther in life than achieving good grades. Due to the many friends and connections made at NDSU, we have a wide range of readily available resources we utilize on the farm and ranch.

Aaron: The connections and the resources we received have been the biggest blessing for us. We are able to grow our ranch effectively because of the time we spent at NDSU.

## Students finishing in May

### Graduate students:

Justine Kilama, Ph.D.  
Christy Finck, M.S.  
Christian Melby, M.S.

### Undergraduate students:

#### Animal Science:

Alexis Bopp (Equine 2nd major)  
Cecelia Carnivale  
Emily Curren  
Jaeger Cyr  
Daedre Dawson (Equine 2nd major)  
Mikayla Faust  
Madison Feiring  
Isabel Greenwald  
Windy Jacobson  
Erika Johnson (Equine 2nd major)  
Kiley Kvamme (Ag Ed with Animal Science 2nd major)  
Grace Mahle  
Talia McDaniel  
Chance Mickelson  
Myles Reichmann  
Reanna Schmidt  
Kathryn Schneider  
Madison Scott  
Lindsay Seevers  
Abby Sigvaldsen (Political Science with Animal Science 2nd major, graduated in December 2025)  
Shelby Skolness  
Eva Tastad  
Emma Tessmer (Equine 2nd major)  
Madeline Ulane (Equine 2nd major)  
Jocelyn Vachal  
Karsyn Villarreal  
Amy Volk  
Denise Yang

#### Equine Science:

Reagan Hanson (Animal Science 2nd major)  
Megan Larson  
Ella Reinke  
Hannah Strong  
Ella Syring (Animal Science 2nd major)

#### Vet Tech:

Katlynn Bennett  
Raeanne Frost  
Kari Fuhrman  
Isabel Nevland  
Schuyler Urecht

# Midwest ASAS meeting

Several NDSU professors and students attended the Midwest American Society of Animal Science meeting in Omaha, Neb., from March 8-11. Attendees included Dr. Kendall Swanson, Dr. Joel Caton, Kell Helmuth (research specialist), Lindsay Seevers (undergraduate student), Kathlyn Hauxwell and Godson Aryee (Ph.D. students), and Christy Finck, Shelby Sullivan and Keara Leong-Machielse (M.S. stu-



From left, Shelby Sullivan, Christy Finck, Kell Helmuth, Godson Aryee, Dr. Kendall Swanson, Keara Leong-Machielse and Lindsay Seevers were among the NDSU contingent at the Midwest ASAS meeting.

dents). All students gave either a poster or oral presentation. Everyone enjoyed net-

working and attending all the presentations.

— Keara Leong-Machielse

# Lambing season focus of workshop

Participants learn about risk factors, essential supplies



Dr. Kelly Froehlich helps a young sheep enthusiast with a hands-on lamb-pulling demonstration.

by Dr. Travis Hoffman

Associate Professor and Extension Sheep Specialist

Sheep producers and industry supporters gathered Feb. 28 at Lillehaugen Farms near Brocket, N.D., for a lambing workshop. The workshop provided timely, practical education focused on lamb health, lambing preparation and on-farm management, along with a farm tour and hands-on learning opportunity organized by Traci Trostad, NDSU Extension Nelson County ANR Agent; Bailey Schroeder, NDSU Extension Walsh County ANR Agent; and Dr. Travis Hoffman, NDSU Extension Sheep Specialist.

Participants learned about the farm's history and had an opportunity to connect with one another before diving into educational sessions. NDSU Extension Veterinarian Dr. Jake Galbreath presented on lamb health, with a focus on respiratory disease and coccidiosis. He discussed common risk factors, signs to watch for, treatment considerations, and management



See SHEEP, page 5

# Livestock Judging Team gets moving

Members compete in 3 elite contests as they travel U.S.

by **Jacob Klaudt**  
Lecturer and Livestock Judging Team Coach

The NDSU Livestock Judging Team launched 2026 with a memorable winter national contest run defined by miles traveled, hands-on workouts, and a return to major stages across the country.

In January alone, team members traveled approximately 3,500 miles through six states, judging more than 50 classes and competing in three prestigious contests: the Jarold Callahan Memorial at the Cattlemen's Congress, and the Hill and Carload Contests at the National Western



See **JUDGING**, page 6



From left, Stran Ressler, Cora Schaunaman, Grace Mehlhoff, Carissa Scheel, Reanna Schmidt, Ty MacDonald, and in back, Kodi Bell and Coach Jacob Klaudt attended the Cattlemen's Congress.

## Lamb ho!



Briggs Hoffman, along with his mom, Meagan, is delighted to meet a lamb at Saddle & Sirloin's Kid-die Days at Shepperd Arena in March. Club members including Forrest Sears introduced community members to an array of NDSU's animals during the annual event.

## Lambing workshop

**SHEEP**, from page 4

practices that can help reduce disease challenges during the lambing season.

Dr. Lacey Quail, NDSU Extension Livestock Management Specialist, followed with a session on lambing toolkit preparation. Quail reviewed essential supplies to have on hand, organization tips for busy lambing periods, and practical steps producers can take to be ready for common situations. A workshop highlight was a hands-on sheep dystocia model education session led by Dr. Kelly Froehlich, on behalf of the American Sheep Industry Association Young Entrepreneurs. Participants practiced identifying lambing complications and discussed decision-making, when to intervene, and best practices for assisting during difficult births. The interactive format allowed producers to ask questions and build confidence for real-world scenarios.

The program concluded with a tour of the farm and barn facilities, giving the 50 attendees the opportunity to see management practices up close and continue conversations with presenters and fellow producers.

Sponsors for the event included the North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association, Walsh County Livestock Improvement Association, Lakota Farm Services, Tronson Grain, Lillehaugen Farms and Lakota Feed Inc.

# Staff, faculty embody core values



Above, Justin Gilbertson passes on the Core Values Award to Laura Mahrer. Below, Travis Hoffman receives the award from 4-H's Angie Johnson.



Multiple people in the department have recently received the college's Core Values Award, which is a peer-to-peer traveling award given to those who reflect NDSU Agriculture's core values of integrity, impact and innovation.

In November it was given to grant coordinator April Helgaas because she works tirelessly and "always has a great attitude."



**Helgaas**

Justin Gilbertson, manager of the Animal Nutrition and Physiology Center, also received the award that month. He was cited for his "steady support and genuine investment in the success of NDSU Agriculture."

In December, business coordinator Laura Mahrer was given the award for her dedication, teamwork and willingness to "go the extra mile for anyone who needs support."

Also that month, Dr. Travis Hoffman, Extension sheep specialist, received the award because of his "positive attitude that provides passion, energy and optimism."



**White**

Finally, in March, administrative secretary Darla White was given the award and cited for her friendly smile and timely responses.

## Department comings and goings since December

### Warm welcome to...

- **Sheela Ramamoorthy** – Professor
- **Samat Amat** – Assistant professor
- **Wenjuan Fang** – Research specialist, Ramamoorthy lab
- **Kell Helmuth** – Research specialist, Amat lab
- **Makayla Brenner** – Post-doctoral research fellow
- **Stephanie Puro** – Sheep Unit manager
- **Kazi Sarjana Safain** – Nutrition Lab manager
- **Lee Adam Bailey** – born Jan. 21 to Bison Strides program assistant Jessie Bailey
- **Cohen Zachary Havelka** – born March 8 to Beef Unit manager Garrett Havelka

### Fond farewell to...

- **German Ramirez Zamudio** – Post-doctoral research fellow

# Livestock Judging Team competes in 3 contests

**JUDGING**, from page 5

Stock Show. This marked NDSU's first appearance at Cattlemen's Congress and the program's first time back in Denver since 2022, making the trip especially significant for the team.

Along the way, the group prioritized elite practice opportunities, visiting Topp Herefords, Clay Elliott Consulting, Crane Showpigs, Black Gold Genetics, Bridle Bit Simmentals, Baca County Feeders, and

Oschner Land & Cattle. Several of these stops were part of the SECO Showcase Collegiate Judging Workout, coordinated by Kaley Carwin and her firm, Peeps Marketing. These workouts provided invaluable exposure to diverse livestock operations and sharpened the team's evaluation and reasons skills ahead of national competition.

The team is especially grateful to alums Matt and Amy Benz, who hosted a team dinner and reasons

workout during the southbound trip. Their hospitality and insight exemplify the strength of the NDSU judging network and the continued investment of alums in student success.

With no Sioux Falls contest on the calendar this year, the team extended its travel schedule to attend the Summit Livestock Show and the Black Hills Stock Show for additional practice. These extra miles reflect their commitment to growth and com-

petitive excellence.

As the spring semester unfolds, the momentum continues from traveling to the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo to preparing for the National Meat Animal Evaluation Contest in Lubbock, Texas. The team has many great stops planned along the way.

Supporters are encouraged to follow the North Dakota State University Livestock Judging Team on Facebook and Instagram for timely updates on the team's endeavors.

## Briefs

Dr. Paul Berg, emeritus professor of animal science, was announced as the recipient of the NDSU Foundation's Distinguished Service Award for 2026. He was honored at a ceremony in April.



Berg



Amy Volk, from Rugby, N.D., majoring in animal science, and Kiley Kvamme, from Kindred, N.D., with a second major in animal science, were named two of this year's top-10 seniors in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources.



Kvamme



Volk



The Swine Barn's expansion is nearly finished, and the unit will host a field day in June featuring tours, seminars and activities for all ages. Keep an eye out for more information on the department's social media.



Trandem

Lecturer Lydia Trandem was given the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Teaching Award of Merit. She was recognized for her teaching excellence at the CAFSNR Annual Faculty Meeting in March.



Mattia Gunkelman, an instructor in equine science, was awarded the student-selected Owl Award during Ag Week. The Owl Award is given to a CAFSNR faculty member whose classes are beneficial, challenging and fun.



Gunkelman



Imtiaz Ali, a doctoral student working under Dr. Lauren Hanna, has been selected as the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources recipient of the Graduate School Research Award. His fellow student, Shelby Sullivan, was selected for the college's Graduate School Teaching Award. Shelby is a master's student working under Dr. Carl Dahlen.



Dr. Thea Fransen, a lecturer in the Vet Tech Program, received a Campus Kudos Award in April. The award is given to NDSU employees as a heart-felt thanks for contributions to campus.



Fransen



Senior Lecturer Stacey Ostby, Vet Tech Program co-director, received the traveling Spirit, Pep and Motivation Award in February from Associate Professor Chris Byrd. He praised her positivity and "the care she shows our students."



Eck

Two staff members were honored this spring for reaching milestones in their years of service at NDSU. Equine Center manager Shannon Eck hit the 20-



Molden

year mark, while Dairy Barn manager Todd Molden is still going strong after 25 years at the university.



The Annual NDSU Day of Honor memorial service in February recognized Beverly Liebelt and Marsha Kappahn, longtime former employees in the Department of Animal Sciences. The ceremony commemorated the lives of NDSU students, staff and faculty who died in 2025.



Caton

Dr. Joel Caton has been chosen to receive the 2026 American Society of Animal Science Fellow Award: Research, which is the highest honor bestowed by the society. Joel joined the faculty of NDSU in 1988. He has written more than 880 publications, and his research program has received more than \$9 million in grant funding.



Josi Solsaa, recent M.S. graduate in animal science, was one of two student speakers at NDSU's commencement ceremony in December.

# At 25, ANPC is built to last

Facility is home to a multitude of research projects

by **Darla White**  
Administrative Secretary

Where at NDSU can you find steers, bulls, pigs, mice and blackbirds under the same roof? This spring you could find all those species at the Animal Nutrition and Physiology Center, or ANPC. It is home to a wide array of animals, and some strange bedfellows, as professors conduct research there, primarily in the areas of growth, nutrition and reproduction.

The ANPC is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It opened in 2001 after extensive



Above, the ANPC's assistant manager, Ashley Ressler, and manager Justin Gilbertson lead one of the steers to a different part of the facility. They enjoy having multiple projects going on at the same time. Below, Ashley checks on some steers that are housed at the facility for an ongoing study.

remodeling and additions transformed it from a poultry center with 1,800 turkeys to a facility that can house any and all sorts of livestock. Besides having space for sheep, cattle and swine, it has small-

animal rooms for rodents, rabbits, or, as the occasion warrants, blackbirds. It also has a classroom, surgery rooms and laboratories.

The 46,000-square-foot facility looks nondescript from the outside, but inside it can be transformed into spaces tailor-made for the animals being studied. Manager Justin Gilbertson's goal is to make it as easy as possible for the researchers and animals to get what they need out of the facility.

"A lot of times we have to build or retrofit things to make projects work," he says, and he's become an expert at making accommodating penning. For instance, one research project required that 140 sheep be individually penned, so Justin got his fill of building pens that year.

Justin has been the manager for two years, and prior to that he was the assistant manager for 14 years. Helping him with the feeding, cleaning, fixing and planning are his assistant manager, Ashley Ressler, and six student workers. Graduate students and undergrads working on the research projects are also familiar faces around the facility.

The ANPC hosts a number of classes and labs each semester, including Introduction to Animal Sciences, Livestock Production, Equine Anatomy and Physiology, and Physiology of Reproduction. Vet tech students also take advantage of the lab space to practice skills they've learned in class.

One of the research advantages of the ANPC is the



See ANPC, page 9

# ANPC home to wide array of animals, research

ANPC, from page 8

ability to get individual data. In the cattle area, each animal has its own bunk, or feeding trough. It's easy to see what the steers or bulls prefer in their feed based on what parts they don't eat. The researchers can also easily determine how much each one is eating. When the animals have to share bunks, that level of clarity is lost.

Another unique feature of the ANPC is the fact that it has no bedding in the pens. All the animal waste drops through slits in the concrete, and every morning flush tanks blast water that carries the waste into a 20-foot-deep pit. As Ashley says, "It's one huge toilet." A machine then separates the liquids from the solid material, which goes into a manure pile and is later used as fertilizer. The liquids end up in the city's sewer system.

The ANPC has room for 1,600 animals, and Justin and Ashley love it when the facility is full. "We would love to get a lot more research out here," Justin says. He proudly recalls one year when the ANPC had 13 projects going on at once. "It's not in our control, but we want more research," said Ashley.

Sounds like someone is ready to build more pens....



Manager Justin Gilbertson stands next to a steer called Buddy, who is a long-term occupant of the ANPC. Buddy loves the attention he gets from tour groups and at educational events.

## Grad student chosen to attend elite Frontiers in Reproduction course

Graduate student Chutikun Kanjanaruch has been chosen as one of 20 students from around the world to attend the Advanced Summer Course at the Marine Biological Laboratory this spring. The course, Frontiers in Reproduction, runs for six weeks, 12-15 hours per day, six days a week.



**Kanjanaruch**

Chuti's Ph.D. adviser is Dr. Larry Reynolds, who served as a faculty/course consultant for 11 years and co-director of the course for five years. "Each of the three two-week ses-

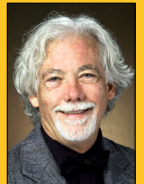
sions of this course brings in 15 to 20 experts in each of the areas and sub-specialties," he said.

The Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., is the premiere biological research lab in the world. Other members of the Department of Animal Sciences who have participated in the Frontiers in Reproduction course include Dr. Anna Grazul-Bilska, Dr. Pawel Borowicz and Dr. Bethania Davila Ruiz.

In addition, 60 Nobel laureates have been affiliated with the Marine Biological Laboratory as students, faculty, staff or visiting scientists.

## Animal Science prof receives Beacon Award

Dr. Larry Reynolds has been named the 2026 recipient of the Beacon Award by the Frontiers in Reproduction Advanced Research Training course at the Marine Biological Laboratory.



**Reynolds**

The award is given to someone who is a "nationally valued source of illumination and guidance – a Beacon – in the development of research careers in the reproductive sciences.

"The award signifies a tangible measure of peer-scientist respect," according to the Board of Scientific Counselors.