

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

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We're hiring!

Research Assistant
Professor, Meat Science
[https://ndsu.ag/
MeatSciAsstProf](https://ndsu.ag/MeatSciAsstProf)

Season prompts reflection



As we come to the close of another productive and inspiring year, I want to extend my warmest Christmas greetings and heartfelt appreciation to the faculty, staff, students,

alumni and supporters of the Department of Animal Sciences. This season gives us an opportunity to reflect on our shared accomplishments and to celebrate the dedication, innovation and community that define our department.

This year has been marked by exceptional achievements across our programs. Our faculty and staff have continued to demonstrate leadership in teaching, research, Extension, livestock judging, attending national and regional conferences, presenting impactful scholarship, receiving awards and recognition, and serving on numerous committees that advance our mission. Their commitment to excellence enhances the reputation of our department and broadens the impact of our work across the livestock and academic communities.

Our students have likewise distinguished themselves, engaging in hands-on learning, research, internships, attending conferences, and leadership activities that prepare them for careers of influence in the animal agriculture sector. We are especially proud of the Saddle and Sirloin Club and their faculty advisors, who are working tire-

lessly throughout the year to organize what will be a historic milestone—the 100th Little International. Their dedication to preserving and celebrating tradition while inspiring future generations is truly commendable.

Significant progress has also been made in enhancing our facilities and supporting future growth. Improvements to the dairy parlor are completed, modernizing our capabilities for teaching and research. With the financial support of agricultural commodities, the expansion of the swine unit is well underway, strengthening our animal care resources and allowing for new opportunities in research, outreach and applied learning. Additionally, we have made significant strides in developing a long-term plan and visionary concept for a future livestock arena. This investment will support student engagement, industry collaboration and community events for years to come.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we also recognize the spirit of collaboration and perseverance that makes them possible. Thank you for your dedication and passion for animal agriculture.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas season and a new year filled with health, peace and continued success. I look forward to all that we will achieve together in the coming year.

Warmest regards,
Guillermo

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www.ag.ndsu.edu/ansc

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Above, student Mikayla Le Roy (left) and Lecturer Lydia Trandem get a little messy using the calving model simulator at the Collegiate Cattle Association's booth at Moos, Ewes and More. At right, Fallyn Stack gives some love and attention to Blondie, a sorrel quarter horse mare.



Moos, Ewes and More captivates

Community gets look at animals, research

by **Jake Galbreath**
Extension Veterinarian

The Department of Animal Sciences hosted Moos, Ewes and More on Sept. 20 at the NDSU Equine Center. Moos, Ewes and More is a free, family-friendly event put on by department faculty, staff and graduate students that showcases their work as well as the animals that call NDSU home.



Nearly 1,000 individuals were in attendance this year. Every attendee received a drawstring bag that they could use to carry small prizes earned at various exhibits. Attendees were able to get up close and personal with ewes and newborn lambs, cows and calves, young pigs, horses and even an observation beehive to see inside their home without worrying about stings.



Above, Dr. Marc Bauer talks about what ruminants eat and the microbes that inhabit their stomachs, but in a fun way. Below, Lyle Dahlen, "future NDSU professor," explains about pregnancy evaluation via ultrasound in sheep.

The farm managers were on hand to talk about how all the animals are cared for. Faculty and staff were able to describe and demonstrate their research, including allowing individuals to look at bacteria under microscopes, watch ultrasounds on pregnant ewes, and even look and reach inside a cow's rumen.

Interacting with the community makes this event a yearly hallmark for the department.

We wish you all a happy and safe holiday season and hope to see you at our events in the coming year.



Department comings and goings since August

Warm welcome to...

- **Thea Fransen** –
Veterinary technology lecturer
- **Jessie Bailey** –
Bison Strides program assistant
- **Elena Sobalvarro** –
Administrative assistant
- **Adelynn Ressler** –
born Aug. 31 to
Animal Caretaker Ashley Ressler

Fond farewell to...

- **Taw Scaff** –
Swine Extension specialist
- **Steven "Skip" Anderson** –
NDSU shepherd
- **Miranda Meehan** –
Livestock Environmental
Stewardship Extension specialist
- **Yssi Entzie** –
Nutrition Lab manager

Dec. 2025 graduates

Graduate students:

Mojtaba Daneshi, Ph.D.
Bethania Davila Ruiz, Ph.D.
Kiersten Gundersen, Ph.D.
Omowumi Olatinwo, M.S.
Josi Solsaa, M.S.

Undergraduate students:

Animal Science:

Matia Anderson
Jaxon Behm
Isabelle Berends (Equine 2nd Major)
Rebecca Brueggemeier
Jasmine Floden
Ella Hammerud
Lucas Mason
Elizabeth Massine
Savanna Rasmussen
Alyssa Schanus

Equine Science:

Kayla Gave
Dasha Howard

Vet Tech:

McKenzie Zuther

2 students travel to Netherlands

Both share data at ISAE congress

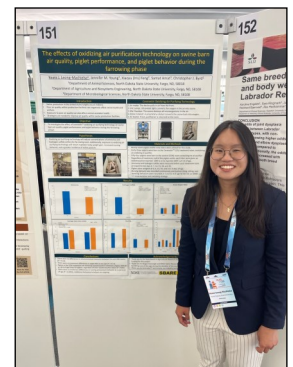
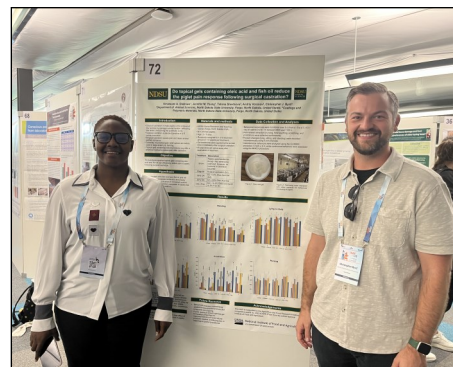
Graduate students Keara Leong-Machielse and Omowumi Olatinwo attended the 58th Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE) in Utrecht, Netherlands, in August. Keara presented a poster titled "The effects of oxidizing air purification technology on swine barn air quality, piglet performance, and piglet behavior during the farrowing phase." Omowumi received the Kelly Swanson Travel Fund Award to attend the event, where she presented data from her research project on reducing pain in male piglets after surgical castration.

Keara and Omowumi are both M.S. students in the Byrd lab.

The ISAE is a forum to discuss and present advances in applied animal behavior science and education.



Omowumi Olatinwo, left, and Keara Leong-Machielse both attended the ISAE congress in the Netherlands with Dr. Christopher Byrd, who is seen below along with the students' research posters.



3 represent at international symposium

Graduate students Christy Finck and Jennifer Hurlbert, along with Dr. Kendall Swanson, attended the 8th European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP) International Symposium on Energy and Protein Metabolism and Nutrition in Rostock-Warnemünde, Germany, in September.

Christy and Jennifer each delivered oral presentations highlighting their M.S. and Ph.D. beef cattle research, respectively, while Dr. Swanson presented his work during the poster session. Christy was awarded a graduate student travel scholarship to support her participation in this prestigious international meeting.

Held every three years, the symposium provides an outstanding opportunity for our department members to share their research and to network with ruminant nutritionists and physiologists from around the world.

— Jennifer Hurlbert



From left, Jennifer Hurlbert, Christy Finck and Dr. Kendall Swanson participated at the 8th EAAP International Symposium.

Livestock judging team hosts camp

Dozens of youth spend day in Watford City developing reasons

by **Jacob Klaudt**

Lecturer and Livestock Judging Team Coach

The NDSU Livestock Judging Team hosted the inaugural Bison Youth Reasons Camp in Watford City, N.D., on Nov. 8. Sixty-three participants from nine counties spent the day “perfecting” a set of reasons on a class of Angus heifers provided by Cargo Stock Farm.



The event marked the first time in about eight years that NDSU has held a youth livestock judging event on the western side of the state. Team members Kodi Bell, Grace Melhoff, Carissa Scheel and Cora Schaunaman, along with coach Jacob Klaudt, provided attendees with insight on how to fine-tune their reasons and improve their craft.

“Helping at the Reasons Camp really showed me how excited North Dakota youth are to learn about livestock judging,” said Carissa, a sophomore. “I loved watching their confidence grow throughout the day, and it was rewarding to see the progress they made from their first set to their last.”

Before students can deliver a high set of



Participants at the inaugural Bison Youth Reasons Camp in Watford City judge and take notes on a class of Angus heifers. This camp marked the first time in about eight years that NDSU has held a youth livestock judging event on the western side of the state.

reasons, they need to come away from a class of livestock with a correct placing, sound logic and an accurate evaluation. To begin the day, participants completed an accuracy set that emulates reasons in a contest setting.

Beyond accuracy, participants also had the opportunity to improve the con-

tent within their reasons. Students learned how to properly format a set of reasons, use correct beef cattle terminology and incorporate performance data into their discussion. They then implemented those changes and re-gave their original set.

See **JUDGING**, page 9

Special medallion ceremony to occur at Little ‘I’ banquet

The NDSU Department of Animal Sciences is pleased to announce that a special medallion ceremony will be held in conjunction with the Little International Banquet on Friday, Feb. 13, at 5 p.m. at the Avalon Events Center.

During this celebration, members within the Department of Animal Sciences will be recognized as holders of newly established, named Evaluation Coach positions.

These named roles not only strengthen the future of our judging teams but also honor the legacy of exceptional former faculty and coaches who shaped the program and built its foundation of excellence.

These positions were made possible through the generosity of numerous donors who contributed to an endowment supporting the NDSU Animal Sciences Judging Programs. Their commitment ensures

that NDSU students will continue to benefit from strong coaching, enhanced experiential learning, and opportunities to excel in regional and national competitions.

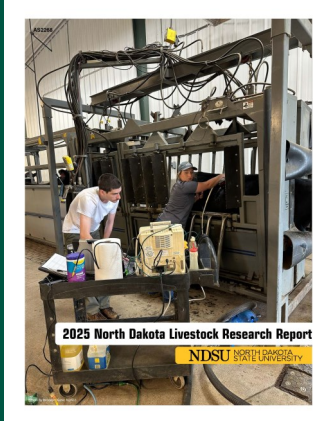
We extend sincere gratitude to the donors whose vision and support have brought these named positions to life. Their investment strengthens the future of the Department of Animal Sciences judging teams and affirms the long-standing tradition of judging excellence.

We invite alumni, friends and supporters to mark their calendars and join us for this meaningful moment at the 100th Little “I” Banquet. It will be a special opportunity to celebrate the legacy of the program, honor our dedicated faculty, and look ahead to the bright future of Animal Sciences at NDSU.

More details about the banquet can be found on the NDSU Saddle & Sirloin Club website: www.ndsusaddleandsirloin.com

N.D. Livestock Research Report hot off the press

The 2025 North Dakota Livestock Research Report was completed and published in August. The report is 92 pages long and contains 25 reports, which makes it one of the most extensive in recent memory. The report provides valuable information to producers and beef cattle industry personnel on the latest beef cattle research conducted by NDSU faculty, scientists, staff and students, says Dr. Kendall Swanson, the publication coordinator. It can be accessed online at <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/2025-north-dakota-livestock-research-report-0>.



Meet the Animals



NDSU students stop by the Meet the Animals event in Shepperd Arena during the first week of Fall Semester to see and learn about the university's livestock, including this cannulated steer.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Phe Strachan



What was your field of study at NDSU?
I majored in Veterinary Technology.

When did you attend?
Between 2014 and 2018.

What are you doing nowadays?
I'm back at home in the Bahamas, working as a Certified Veterinary Technician/Assistant at Dolphin Cay, Atlantis. I work mainly with bottlenose dolphins, and California and South American sea lions. However, we also care for the company's full aquarium collection, security's K9 unit, as well as any stray cats that live on property. It's quite an active job, so in my downtime, my hobbies are comparatively much more mellow: sewing, reading, traveling — old lady hobbies, basically.

What is one of your favorite classroom/campus memories?

My favorite campus memory actually happened right after a lecture in my junior

year. As an island girl, born and raised, I had never seen snow until I came to NDSU. I remember walking through the Quentin Burdick Building one day and saying to a classmate that I was so proud to have never slipped on ice, even though I had been in Fargo for three years. So, of course, Murphy's Law took place as soon as we got outside, and I almost immediately slipped and slid all the way down an icy ramp. I was unhurt (besides a little bruised ego), but the timing of it all makes me smile to this day.

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

I think being at NDSU taught me how to grow up. When I moved to North Dakota, that was my first time living away from my parents. NDSU was the perfect middle ground between dependency and independence. The staff and overall community were patient and thorough in their teachings, and I feel like that environment set me up for success in my future.

Briefs



Molden

Todd Molden, dairy barn manager, was featured in a November issue of Dairy Star in its article about the barn's recently upgraded parlor.

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Lecturer Lydia Trandem received the Spirit, Pep and Motivation Award in August from Ron Johnson, ag research technician. He highlighted her friendliness and active involvement in department events. Lydia then passed along the award to Associate Professor Chris Byrd in November. He was deserving because of his upbeat attitude and willingness to help wherever needed.

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Garrett Havelka, beef unit manager, gave a presentation at the Ekre Field Day in September. The Albert Ekre Grassland Preserve is west of Walcott, N.D., and Garrett's topic was the NDSU beef herd and hormone detection research.



Havelka

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Grant coordinator April Helgaas received a Campus Kudos Award in October for her willingness and ability to help others in the department. Campus Kudos are given to NDSU employees who demonstrate excellence in customer service, continuous improvement, teamwork, integrity or quality.



Helgaas

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An article about the Bison Strides program and how it benefits people with disabilities was featured in the Nov. 29 issue of The Forum newspaper.

Graduate student Bethania Davila Ruiz successfully defended her Ph.D. dissertation in October. A month later she started a postdoctoral position in the lab of Mala Mahendroo in the Green Center for Reproductive Biology at the University of Texas-Southwestern.



Davila Ruiz

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Shannon Eck, manager of the Equine Center, received the Core Values Award in August for her "love of animals and dedication to their care." She awarded it the next month to Shane Paasch, coordinator of farm operations in the department, because he "goes above and beyond to support the farm unit employees on a daily basis."



...

Dr. Carl Dahlen received NDSU Agriculture's Eugene R. Dahl Excellence in Research Award at the 2025 Faculty and Staff Awards ceremony in December, in part because of his visionary approach to multigenerational experiments.



Dahlen

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Graduate student Samantha Ekstrom attended the 80th annual Newell Ram Show and Sale to test wool samples for producers and also showed sheep for the Hettinger Research Center in Newell, S.D. She gathered data and worked with the animals in the Dakota Summer Ram Test and the Dakota Summer Buck Test. She is now gathering data and working with the animals in the Dakota Fall Ram Test.



Drs. Carl Dahlen and Erika Berg were both recipients of the Core Values Award in October. Carl was cited as being "creative and innovative in his research and educational pursuits." Erika was nominated for her "passion and kindness working with Bison Strides." The Core Values Award is a peer-to-peer traveling award given to those who reflect NDSU Agriculture's core values.



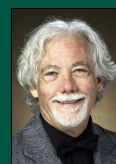
Dahlen



Berg

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Researchers from the Animal Sciences Department are among the top 2 percent of the most cited scientists globally, according to the annual list that came out Sept. 19. Those on the 2024 single-year list are Drs. Larry Reynolds, Joel Caton and Carl Dahlen. Dr. Reynolds is also included on the 2024 career list, along with Emeritus Professor Dale Redmer. Inclusion on the list signifies worldwide recognition of research excellence.



Reynolds



Caton



Redman

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More than 100 students attended the Midwest Poultry Consortium Networking Panel at NDSU in October. Students learned about the Center of Excellence scholarship/internship program and also got to network with poultry industry professionals.

...

Graduate student Josi Solsaa attended the North Central Region American Association for Agricultural Education Conference in West Lafayette, Ind., in September. She presented a portion of her research titled "Evaluating Experiential Learning: The Impact of Undergraduate Equine Research Experiences on Undergraduate Education and Career Readiness."



Solsaa

ASGSO members play vital role

Members of the Animal Science Graduate Student Organization (ASGSO) have been busy this semester with research, professional development, class and social events. Grad students have stayed involved in the department helping out with Moos, Ewes and More, and being active members of department committees. Carnivore Catering has been keeping busy with events including the NDSU Tailgates and the upcoming Jungels sale.

The annual Testicle Festival was held at the end of October, and members had a great time hanging out together! The social committee planned the Animal Sciences Department holiday party and the graduate student holiday get-together. ASGSO also organized an Animal Sciences Department holiday food drive competition: grad students vs. faculty vs. staff!

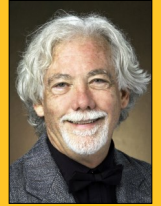
— *Katrina Kratzke,*
ASGSO president



At left, Carnivore Catering serves a delicious meal at an NDSU football tailgate. Above, ASGSO members have fun at the annual Testicle Festival in October.

Professor recognized with award

Dr. Larry Reynolds of the Animal Sciences Department and the Center for Nutrition and Pregnancy at NDSU has been chosen as the 2026 recipient of the Beacon Award by the Frontiers in Reproduction Advanced Research Training course at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass. (<http://fir.mbl.edu>). According to the course's Board of Scientific Counselors, the award signifies "a tangible measure of peer-scientist respect for the (individual's) international impact ... and establishes him or her as a nationally valued source of illumination and guidance – a Beacon – in the development of research careers in the reproductive sciences."



Reynolds

The Frontiers in Reproduction course is considered the premiere course of its kind in the world. The 20 students each year are from every continent (excluding Antarctica) and include senior Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows, medical fellows and junior faculty.

The Marine Biological Laboratory, which is home to the course, is the premiere biological research institution in the world.

More than 60 Nobel laureates, mostly in the categories of chemistry or of physiology or medicine, have been affiliated with the lab as students, faculty, staff, or visiting scientists (<http://www.mbl.edu/nobels/>).

Animal rescue gets Partnership Award

The Veterinary Technology Program in the Animal Sciences Department proudly bestowed the NDSU Agriculture Partnership Award on the Turtle Mountain Animal Rescue organization in October. The rescue assists the program and its students by providing animal educators in the form of wonderful dogs and cats that need veterinary medical care.

"The benefits of this partnership to our education program are immense," said Stacey Ostby, co-director of the Veterinary Technology Program. "We hope this partnership can continue to benefit animals and future veterinary technologists for years into the future."

The Partnership Awards, which were created earlier this year, recognize the outstanding partners of all units within the College of Agriculture.



From left, Dr. Lisa Christenson, Dawn Herford, Heather Kraus, Senior Lecturer Stacey Ostby and Dr. Greg Lardy celebrate the Vet Tech Program's partnership with Turtle Mountain.

Swine barn grows with its animals

New addition being built to increase capacity and student opportunities

by **Darla White**
Administrative Secretary

The swine industry in North Dakota has a small footprint, er, hoofprint, but the NDSU Swine Unit is doing its best to change that.

The most noticeable indication of that is the construction under way at the barn. Another finishing area is being added that will allow the swine unit to function at full capacity. The current facility, which was built in 1983, contains two farrowing (birthing) rooms. Only one room is used at a time because there's not enough space for the pigs to reach market weight if both rooms were utilized. The new addition will solve that problem along with making it easier to get the finished pigs to market thanks to a proper loading chute. A classroom is also being built to expand the educational opportunities at the barn.

Megan Kavanagh, the swine unit manager, is excited about the new possibilities. She jumped into the position in August 2024, right as she was finishing her master's degree from the University of Minnesota. She has a passion for pigs and is eager to share it with others.

"Pigs are smart," she says. "I like to see their personalities, and the way they're thinking." She also appreciates how much can be done with pigs. "The industry is so much larger than it seems," she says.

Megan and half a dozen student workers take care of the 400 to 500 pigs that are typically at the swine barn. About 75 of them make up the breeding herd -- the sows and boars that stick around for years. The others are the feeder pigs. They grow rapidly and generally are ready for market after five months. Because the unit is a



At left, Megan Kavanagh, swine unit manager, holds one of the piglets at the swine barn. Above is the construction of the new addition, which will include a classroom and another finishing area. Below, a student worker cleans the pens.



farrow-to-finish operation, students can witness all stages of production in little more than a semester.

Multiple classes visit the barn each semester to get hands-on learning. For example, vet tech students practice blood draws on the pigs. Students in livestock evaluation assess the breeding hogs. Students in the introductory animal science class learn how to read ear notches. And livestock production students practice handling swine and vaccinating piglets.

Building relationships with undergraduates is a priority for Megan. "Working with students is the highlight of my job," she says.

Research is also an important mission of the swine barn. Associate Professor Christopher Byrd's specialty is swine research, so he and his graduate students often have projects going on at the unit. The next one will focus on training sows to



Above, the pigs tend to stick together whether they are a few months old or, at right, newly born and staying close to mom.

Swine barn grows with its pigs

SWINE, from page 8

have their blood drawn. That one could be interesting, since Megan says the sows have quite a bit of sass and personality.

While there isn't a swine club at the moment, the barn has a close association with the Saddle and Sirloin Club. The swine unit provides the pigs for the club's annual Little International. In fact, some lucky pigs at the barn right now will be making their public debut at the 100th Little "I" in February. Megan bred them specifically to be excellent specimens for that historic event.

Megan hopes to invite the public to see the barn's expansion after construction ends next spring. If all goes well, many more people will see the possibilities of the swine industry and how NDSU is poised to grow -- possibly as fast as its pigs.



Ag Olympics showdown



Students play human foosball during the Ag Olympics at the beginning of Fall Semester. Students got to play games, learn about the department's many clubs, and win prizes. The members of the winning human foosball team earned matching T-shirts.

Livestock judging team hosts youth reasons camp

JUDGING, from page 4

"The Bison Youth Reasons Camp helped me find the motivation to pursue livestock judging," said participant Grace Schwab from Lisbon, N.D. "I felt more confident in my reasons by the end of the camp."

The afternoon focused on presenting a set of reasons. Youth participated in activities designed to build confidence, improve voice quality and enhance their entrance into a reasons room.

Students then competed in a Reasons Battle Royal, during which they found a spot along the wall of a large auditorium and delivered their sets all at once to practice giving reasons with distractions present.

Afterward, attendees gave their set for the third and final time, incorporating adjustments made to accuracy, content and presentation.

"The Bison Youth Reasons Camp helped me be more confident with reasons," said participant Hayley Howey from Lisbon, N.D.

The Bison Youth Reasons Camp is one of several development events offered to youth over the past six months. Other activities involving the NDSU Livestock Judging Team include Chalk Talks; Coaching Webinars; the Beat the Heat Summer Livestock Judging Workout; the Bison Youth Reasons Jackpot; and the Youth Livestock Judging Contest at the North Star Classic.