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**ANIMAL
SCIENCES**



Have You
HERD

**UF/IFAS DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES
NEWSLETTER VOL. 11 | SUMMER 2024**

**SUMMER
2024**

Have You **HERD**

PHOTO CREDIT: MATTI MOYER



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

With this issue of our Have You HERD newsletter comes the end of another eventful summer and the beginning of what promises to be an exciting and action-packed fall semester. Over the summer, our teaching, research, and extension missions proceeded full steam ahead.

We're proud to congratulate our Beef Program for being awarded the American Brahman Breeders Association 2024 Performance Breeder of the Year award. On Page 4, Jesse Savell, our Beef Unit manager, reviews the history and the many achievements of the UF Beef Program, particularly the program's advancement of the Brahman breed.

Later we recap our extension efforts, including the 2024 Bull & Heifer Sale and our 73rd Annual Beef Cattle Short Course. We also highlight our attendance at the 2024 Florida Cattlemen's Convention and Allied Trade Show, where we announced the formation of the Jim Handley Endowed Professorship of Beef Cattle Sciences.

On Page 12, we take a look at the ways in which Dr. Yu's lab has been advancing research in AI, an exploding field that is influencing the animal industry by improving precision and quality in livestock farming practices.

This summer presented some unique and customized educational experiences for current and prospective Animal Sciences students. For the third consecutive year, we welcomed seven young learners to participate in our Have you HERD shadowing experience, which gives high school students interested in pursuing an Animal Sciences degree the opportunity to sit in on classes for a day.

Dr. Faciola's four-week summer study abroad program brought students to more than 10 cities across Italy to learn about modern agricultural practices in the animal industry, visiting several farms, dairy facilities, and veterinary schools.

Back in the States, students attended the Reciprocal Meat Conference in Oklahoma City, OK, participating along the way in an industry tour of food processing and packaging facilities across multiple states.

Closer to home, our Equine Program's foal handling practicum, led by Justin Callaham, is providing essential instruction to students and horses alike, preparing the horses for sale and students for success in the equine industry.

Lastly, we would like to extend a big congratulations to Debbie Nagy, one of our ANS staff members, on her upcoming retirement after 42 years at the University of Florida. Please enjoy our latest newsletter which follows. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to move the ANS mission forward. We could not do what we do without our alumni, friends, and stakeholders who generously support our efforts in so many ways. Whether you are giving through financial support, taking the time to speak to our students, or providing jobs and internships, we cannot say thank you enough. If you are interested in giving, please visit <https://give.ifas.ufl.edu/animal-sciences-giving/> to learn about various giving opportunities, or feel free to reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,

John Arthington, Ph.D.

Professor and Chair



John Arthington
PROFESSOR & CHAIR

AMERICAN BRAHMAN BREEDERS ASSOCIATION 2024 PERFORMANCE BREEDER OF THE YEAR

**By Jesse Savell, University of
Florida Beef Program Manager**

The University of Florida registered its first Brahman cattle in 1949 under the herd No. 1113. These cattle were located at the Range Cattle Experiment Station in Ona, FL. The foundation of the original herd came in the form of donated heifers from Eastern Brahman Breeders Association members like Stuart Ranch, A. Duda & Sons Inc., and U.S. Sugar Corp. At this time, much emphasis was placed on research associated with crossbreeding and the effects of heterosis on beef production.

More recently, the Brahman herd from the USDA Subtropical Agriculture Research Station was moved to Gainesville when the station closed in 2012. Approximately 70 mature cows were transferred under member No. 55587. Since that time, there has been an aggressive strategy to improve fertility in the Brahman herd. Specific attention has been placed on early attainment of puberty and reducing calving interval through culling and selection. The current herd consists of approximately 200 mature Brahman cows, 64 yearling Brahman heifers, 12 Brahman herd sires, and 50 embryo transfer recipients. These animals are housed at the University of Florida Beef Research Unit in Gainesville, FL.

UF began exposing its yearling Brahman heifers in 2017 and has continued every year since. This past year, 58% (34 of 59) of the yearling heifers conceived to calve at 2 years of age in a 70-day breeding season. For the past 3 years, UF has also evaluated the carcass composition of approximately 64 female replacements each year using ultrasound measurements. This past year, UF evaluated the female replacements for average daily gain, feed efficiency, and residual feed intake using the Vytelle Sense system, formerly known as GrowSafe. These heifers are currently enrolled in a methane emissions trial.

In 2018 UF began a similar evaluation of the male calves. The top 48 bull calves at weaning are performance-tested for average daily gain, feed efficiency, and residual feed intake. These 48 bulls also undergo serial ultrasound measurements



for carcass composition at 12 and 15 months of age. They also perform serial breeding soundness exams on these bulls at 15 and 18 months of age to identify those bulls who achieve early puberty. The top 15 bulls from this selection process are offered in the annual UF Bull and Heifer Sale in early May. The remainder of the bulls are castrated, finished, and harvested at UF to obtain feeding and carcass data.

The selection process for both male and female progeny begins at birth. Animals with excessive birth weight, difficult birth, failure to suckle, or other complications are culled from the program. At weaning, all calves are evaluated by a committee based on structural correctness, disposition, phenotype, growth performance, hip height, and body condition score. Selections are weighted to a lesser extent with the influence of the pedigree, expected progeny differences (EPDs), and performance of the parents. These latter parameters have been taken into account before conception. At weaning, approximately 65% of the heifers will be retained as potential replacements and 50% of the bulls. The vast majority of these females will enter the herd. Only 15% of the bull calves will ultimately make it into service as breeding bulls. An additional 2% of the bulls are kept as potential herd sires.

UF has selected these cattle ruthlessly for economically important traits like good feet, good udders, calving ease, and

good disposition. These traits are vitally important for beef production at all levels and help to add to the viability of the UF program over time. UF owns four of the top 10 Grey Brahman trait leaders for birth weight (BW) EPD, and are breeding to two additional BW trait leaders through artificial insemination. In 2023, 46% of the calves born at UF were produced by artificial insemination. An additional 14% were produced by the use of embryo transfer. UF produces the majority of these embryos in its own advanced reproduction lab. UF has also established minimum thresholds for fertility. They do not superovulate a female unless she calved at 2 years of age. They also will not keep a herd sire prospect that does not pass a full breeding soundness exam by 15 months of age and must be produced by a cow that calved at 2. UF also culls every female that fails to raise a calf for a second time, regardless of her pedigree, phenotype, or performance.

In 2023, UF weaned 169 purebred Brahman calves and 34 Angus sired calves produced by 2-year-old Brahman heifers who were born within a single 90-day calving season. They also implemented total herd reporting in 2023 by registering every calf. This will be very important to improve the accuracy of EPDs as well as increase the number of cows who qualify for Maternal Merit designation. Looking through the records, I have found that UF has several cows who would have qualified for Maternal Merit status, except that some of the progeny weren't registered — typically their first calf as a 2-year-old. It is also important to note that UF had their first cow qualify for Elite Maternal Merit this year. UF is looking forward to many more Maternal Merit cows with the newly implemented total herd reporting.

The genomics faculty at the University of Florida (Dr. Fernanda Rezende and Dr. Raluca Mateescu) maintain a genomic database of all UF animals that allows them to make the best mating decisions possible. It is important to recognize that Mateescu was named the 2023 American Brahman Breeders Association (ABBA) Brahman Friend of the Year for her exceptional work in the field of Brahman genomics. UF also utilizes a crossbred herd of approximately 300 mature cows for proving young bulls and gaining more information. Many of these progeny are sired by Brahman bulls and will be fed and harvested at a commercial feedlot to obtain relevant industry-based information.

The University of Florida has been actively involved in several Brahman activities. UF hosted the Brahman Foundation Leadership Camp in the summer of 2022. UF also hosted the Florida Brahman Field Day and Heifer Sale in 2023 with plans to host again in 2024 and 2025. This event is the annual meeting and largest fundraiser for the Florida Brahman Association and also serves as the annual meeting for the Florida Junior Brahman Association. UF participated in the 2023 ABBA Performance Tested Bull Program and successfully sold the fourth high-selling bull this past year. Faculty members Dr. Todd Thrift and Dr. Chad Carr are both approved ABBA judges. Several faculty members sit on boards of other beef cattle-related organizations. UF also implements the Beef Quality Assurance Program for the state of Florida and hosts several tours each year that highlight the Brahman breed and its influence on beef cattle production.



I have established an unofficial motto for the program — “*Moving Forward*” — which I believe encompasses UF’s commitment to the improvement of the breed through the use of accurate, relevant, applicable data. This could not have been accomplished without the steadfast support of fellow Brahman breeders. They have selflessly allowed UF access to their very best cattle in an effort to improve the breed for everyone. The University of Florida is honored to accept the ABBA Performance Breeder of the Year Award!

INTERNSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

By Meg Alexander



Chloe Cole is a member of the UF class of 2026 and completed an internship this summer with Alliance Dairies in Trenton, FL. Over the span of eight weeks, Cole had the opportunity to work with their maternity, breeding, and hospital departments. From learning about neonatal calf care, to gestational procedures and schedules, or dairy cattle's health and medication, she said she was able to immerse herself in some of the many important aspects of the dairy industry. One of her favorite parts of this internship was meeting new people from various cultures and locations, as well as learning about how broad the dairy industry is. Cole said her experience from this internship allowed her to apply knowledge from the classroom in the real world, and she is excited about the new connections she was able to make in the agriculture industry. Her advice to fellow students interested in internships is, "If the opportunity comes, take it! Any type of internship can be super helpful even if it's not necessarily in the field you want to work in."



Bibina Joseph is a member of the UF class of 2025 and completed a social media internship with the CancerCollegeAlliance. She was given the opportunity to remotely manage social media, collaborate with the CancerCollegeAlliance board, and assist with outreach and event planning. Throughout her time as an intern, Joseph has been able to learn website-building skills, build audience engagement, and gain experience with X (formerly known as Twitter). She said one of the ways this internship has enhanced her undergraduate experience is learning new skills in a position where travel isn't required, and she enjoyed being able to serve in a position that allowed her to help others. Her advice to fellow students interested in internships is, "It may seem discouraging seeing others get multiple internship offers, or cool offers out of state, but there is something for everyone; you will find something and it's your responsibility to learn as much as you can."

2024 ANS INTERNSHIP SEMINAR



Morgan Yoder is a member of the UF Class of 2024 and completed an internship with Adams Land and Cattle in Broken Bow, NE, this summer. She served as a processing intern, working in the processing barn where she learned about cattle care. Yoder said she gained quality cattle handling skills including knowledge about maintaining a safe, efficient environment for the cattle, and the ability to work in a fast-paced environment. She believes her experiences in the classroom were easily transferable to her internship, and she has formed strong connections with fellow students that broadened her understanding of the agriculture industry. Her advice to a student interested in internships is, “Do the thing that is out of your comfort zone! I had the opportunity to be in Nebraska for the summer at a feedlot, which is not something that is normal for a Florida girl to do. However, it has been one of the best experiences of my life and has opened even more doors for me whenever I graduate. It might be scary at first, but it’s so worth it!”



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10



6:30 PM – 9:00 PM



**STRAUGHN PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

Students, educators, employers, and friends are invited to join us as we hear from about 50 current Animal Sciences students who are showcasing their internship experiences. There will also be networking opportunities with representatives from various agricultural enterprises looking to host an intern. Food and refreshments will be offered throughout the event. We look forward to seeing you there!

IN FIVE

By Meg Alexander



Giuliana Pezzella specialized in Animal Biology while studying at the University of Florida and currently serves as a Data Operations Advisor at PEAK Genetics. Throughout her undergraduate studies, Pezzella volunteered at UF's Small Animal Hospital, cared for calves at the Dairy Research Unit, and assisted with thesis work for graduate students in the Animal Sciences Department. She believes that her experiences in the classroom were well-rounded and challenged her to consider alternative career opportunities beyond her initial goal of veterinary school. Pezzella said the department helped her to discover new interests, shape her career goals, and learn more about how she could best serve the agriculture industry. Her advice to a senior is, "Focus on learning what you can in the moment about life and about yourself. The moment you stop worrying about how things 'should be,' you will see more opportunities to create the life you want to have."



Cole Diepersloot specialized in Animal Biology and is now pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. During his time at UF, Diepersloot was a member of the Dairy Science Club, participated in the Dairy Challenge, attended the U.S. Dairy Education & Training Consortium, and completed undergraduate research. He believes the most beneficial components of his experience in the department were getting involved with undergraduate research and gaining industry exposure from the Dairy Science Club. Diepersloot said that his time at UF helped prepare him for the future through experience, and he enjoyed the connections he was able to form with faculty and students. His advice to students is, "You should always try to challenge yourself and step outside your comfort zone because you can learn a lot and grow as a person."



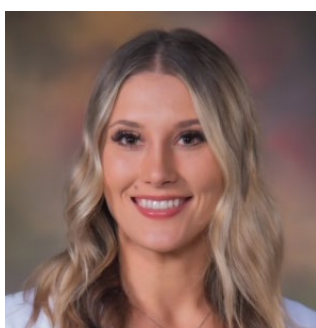
YEARS

Checking in with our summer 2019 alumni



Briana Hawryluk has a Food Animal specialization and is now a Product Developer with Oscar Mayer. Hawryluk described her undergraduate experience as welcoming and nurturing, and found getting to know her advisors and professors helped to expand her horizons for career paths and interests.

While at UF, she participated in undergraduate research, was a member of the UF Meats Judging Team, and served as a TA for several ANS classes. Though she didn't have a typical internship as an undergrad, Hawryluk said that a short course with Tyson Foods helped her understand how her knowledge of meat science could be applied to a wide range of careers. Her advice to a senior is, "Take everything in stride and if an opportunity you're even slightly interested in comes up, just say yes!"



Kaitlyn Staszewski Ruffin graduated with an Equine specialization and is now an equine veterinarian at War Equine. During her time at UF, Ruffin was a member of the UF Meats Judging Team and UF Block and Bridle, assisted with organizing Roping in the Swamp, and collaborated on a research project at the UF Swine Teaching Unit. Ruffin believes her experiences in the department fueled her passion for medicine, brought her lifelong relationships, and strengthened her connection with department faculty.

She said her internship with Alderman Veterinary Services as an undergraduate student helped her to gain valuable hands-on and technical skills that contributed to her success during veterinary school. Her advice to a student is, "Figure out a way to make it work. Attend the meetings, take the trips with your club, and get involved. The connections you will make are invaluable!"



ANIMAL SCIENCES STUDY ABROAD

By Dr. Antonio Faciola

The 2024 Animal Science in Italy study abroad program, led by Dr. Antonio Faciola, provided an enriching experience for 20 students this summer. For four weeks, students traveled to more than 10 cities, engaging in a blend of agricultural, cultural, and educational activities.

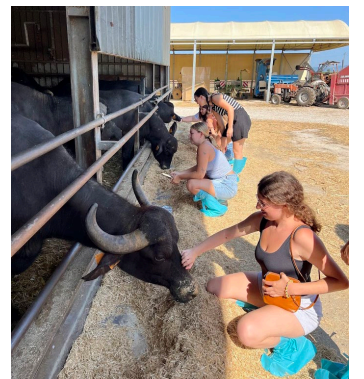
Students delved into the technical aspects of animal agriculture, visiting sheep, buffalo, pigs, beef and dairy cattle farms. Highlights included tours of Prosciutto di Parma, a Parmigiano Reggiano facility, Mozzarella di Bufala, and various cheese production facilities. An additional visit to an agricultural biotech facility further broadened their understanding of modern agricultural practices. The group also visited some of the best veterinary schools in the country, including Milan, Bologna, Padova, and Naples, gaining insights into veterinary education and practices in Italy.

City tours and visits to historical sites fostered these students' cultural competence and global perspective. The group explored Florence, Bologna, Milan, Pisa, Siena, Padova, Rome, Naples, and Sorrento. They visited the Accademia Gallery Museum, the Pantheon, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Colosseum, and numerous other landmarks. Classes in pasta making, pizza making, and cooking, along with cheese and wine tastings, enriched their cultural experience. Students interacted with local experts and peers, developing skills that are



invaluable in the global job market. Weekends were free, allowing students to explore independently, fostering self-reliance, adaptability, and language skills.

Students completed assignments such as day trip summaries, comparisons of practices between Italy and the United States, and reflective essays. These practices, combined with diverse activities, ensured a well-rounded and meaningful educational experience. Key learning outcomes included: technical aspects of animal agriculture, cultural competence, global perspective, and professional and personal growth. This study abroad program provided students with a comprehensive, impactful experience that combined academic learning, cultural immersion, and personal development.



RESEARCH UPDATE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LIVESTOCK FARMING

By Meg Alexander

Dr. Haipeng Yu joined the faculty in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida through an Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiative partnership between UF and NVIDIA, a technology company leading the world in AI. Before joining UF, he was a post-doctoral research associate in the Department of Animal Science at Iowa State University. His research primarily focuses on incorporating multi-omics data to solve agricultural problems using machine learning, statistical modeling, and computational methods.

Today, Yu is an enthusiastic and dedicated professor who continuously strives to advance agriculture and technology. His research group, the Artificial Intelligence in Animal Omics Sciences Lab, currently consists of five team members who are working to develop statistical and AI models and tools to enhance livestock farming.

“My current research focuses on two areas, the first being the development of AI models and software tools to capture digital phenotypes for precision livestock farming,” Yu said. “The second research area is to develop AI and statistical models to integrate high-dimensional, heterogeneous multi-omics data for the genetic improvement of animals.”

With new methods in precision livestock farming, the monitoring process for livestock, such as beef and dairy cattle, can be significantly improved through 24-hour camera surveillance. Yu recognizes that traditional livestock farming practices often entail several farmers checking on their livestock throughout the day. He is studying the benefits of combining camera surveillance and AI models to monitor cattle weight, health, behavior, and growth. Through the collection of this video-based, real-time phenotypic data, the program monitoring the cattle continuously processes information, “learning” to identify cattle individually and reporting their performances to farmers.



YU LAB MEMBERS (LEFT TO RIGHT): YUECHENG GUO, JIN WANG, YUXI ZHANG, LUCAS BASOLLI BORSATTO, ANGELO DE CASTRO, HAIPENG YU

“A camera can work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to monitor cattle,” Yu said. “The camera, combined with trained AI models, can learn to detect and identify if something is wrong with the cattle. For example, if the system has learned to identify all visible cattle and noticed one was lying down for a long time, it would send a notification to the ranch manager, reporting something might be wrong with that specific cow.”

Yu’s second research interest involves using AI and statistical models to understand how cattle’s genetics manifest in their phenotypes. “In this case, we link phenotypes and genetic information to explore how much of the phenotypic variations are controlled by the animal’s genetic merit,” he said.

The data collected by these AI models and tools could be instrumental in enhancing genetic improvement in cattle breeding. “If we integrate multi-omic data, such as proteomics and



YU PRESENTS HIS LAB’S RESEARCH AT THE NATIONAL CATTLEMEN’S BEEF ASSOCIATION 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

metabolomics, which influences other important biological processes, then we could eventually predict future phenotypes of cattle and how different conditions, such as feed, might affect their growth and development.”

Yu’s research is at the forefront of AI integration in animal agriculture, and his studies will further enhance livestock farming.



YU’S LAB SETS UP CAMERAS AT THE UF DAIRY FARM TO COLLECT VIDEO DATA.

BEEF CATTLE SHORT COURSE

By Dr. Todd Thrift

This year's Beef Cattle Short Course focused on consumer-facing aspects of beef production. We reached out to university and industry experts interested in increasing demand and value of beef purchases by end consumers for our plenary sessions. The first day of the program we discussed the market outlook, beef cattle behavior and welfare, promotion of beef demand, and the challenges of running a small meat packing plant. On the second day of this program, we visited the University of Florida Meat Lab for hands-on activities looking at adding value to the beef carcass, assessing carcass quality, and marketing high-value cattle. To wrap up the program, we heard research updates from several faculty projects focused specifically on beef cattle. We are fortunate to be able to attract such outstanding speakers to the Florida Beef Cattle Short Course, and we appreciate their time commitment to this event. We want to extend a thank you to our sponsors, without whom this course would not be possible. We would also like to thank this year's committee chair, Dr. Jason Scheffler — thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to this program over the last year!



DR. JASON SCHEFFLER
COMMITTEE CHAIR

Scan the QR code to learn more about
the Animal Sciences Beef Program!





2024 BULL & HEIFER SALE

By Dr. Todd Thrift

This year, we offered, 15 Brahman bulls and 14 Brahman heifers for sale in our annual Brahman Bull and Heifer Sale. This is the third time a select group of yearling Brahman heifers were offered in our sale. These heifers are the later born females from the spring calving Brahman herd. Three of the heifers are embryo calves and the remaining are AI sired or out of outstanding cleanup bulls. The heifers were selected to be gentle and almost all of them are halter broken and ready to lead. While preparing for the sale, the 2024 Spring Seedstock class (pictured above) taught by Dr. Todd Thrift learned about cattle management and marketing, the registration process, data collection, and catalog preparation. We want

to extend a thank you to the Florida Cattle Enhancement Program, as they have been a great supporter of the UF Brahman Project. They have provided funding for finishing the steers to obtain meat quality estimates in addition to funding research around tenderness, feed efficiency, synchronization, in-vitro fertilization, and genetic evaluation. Their support has been instrumental to the success of the Brahman

Project. Merck and Zoetis have been generous in their donation of animal health products that are used in teaching, research, and extension programs that support the Brahman Project. Last but not least we would like to thank all of our buyers and supporters for this year's sale! We have already begun our selection for next year's sale prospects and are excited to show what we have to offer!



RECIPROCAL MEAT CONFERENCE



By Dr. Jason Scheffler & Kyle Mendes



The Reciprocal Meat Conference (RMC) was held June 16–19 in Oklahoma City.

Students participating included Karina Vestergaard, Hadley Wimsett, Jordan Hartley, Jeremy Summers, Kaley Tamanini, Mac-ey Farinha, Isabel Ribeiro, and Sydney Brunson.

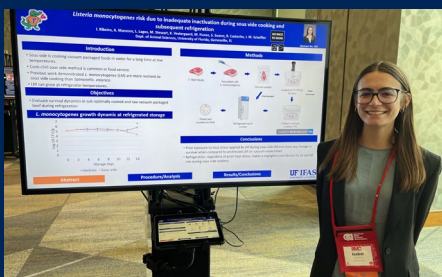
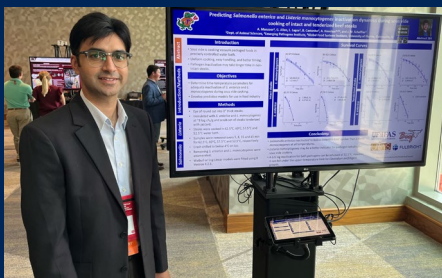
Faculty included Jason Scheffler, Tracy Scheffler, Chad Carr, Kyle Mendes, Amie Imler and Dwain Johnson (emeritus).

Mendes and Imler led the students on an industry tour on the way to Oklahoma City, first stopping at Bar-S Foods in Seminole, OK, where they manufacture more than 3 million hot dogs every day.

Next they visited The Tyson Discovery Center in Springdale, AR, to tour their research and development facility and a Tyson tortilla factory where they make the shells for the Taco Bell Doritos Locos Tacos.

The last stop before the conference was Ralph's Packing Company in Perkins, OK, where they got to see their jerky and snack stick operation.

At RMC, the students participated in the meat science quiz bowl with both teams finishing in the top half of 38 teams. RMC presents a cross-section of industry and academia, so students were able to visit the career fair, listen to scientific and issue-based talks, and network with industry professionals from all over the country.



SUMMER INDUSTRY TOUR

By Matti Moyer

In August, 14 undergraduate students traveled with staff and faculty on our Animal Sciences Summer Industry Tour. Over this trip they covered industry stops across Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana.

In Colorado students visited the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, JBS Beef Processing Facility, JBS Corporate Office, and Cervi Producers Feedlot.

In Wyoming students visited Sims Cattle Company, Padlock Ranch, Crane Sheep Farm, Cody Nite Rodeo, Beckton Red Angus Ranch, Red Canyon Eco-tours, Wyoming Wool Growers, Cody Wyoming Museum, Grand Teton National Park and Kirby Creek Range Sheep Farm.

In Montana students visited Yellowstone National Park, Little-Belt Cattle Company, Producer's Partnership Processing, Pioneer Meats, and Meats of Montana Processing Facility. We would like to thank Amie Imler and Allyson Trimble for all of their hard work putting this credited course and trip together.

We would like to thank all of these business and operations for opening their gates to us. We would also like to thank our industry partners, the Animal Sciences department, staff, and faculty for their support in making this experience such a success for our students!



**Scan this QR code to see
a video overview of
their trip!**

My favorite part of this trip was getting to see the various parts of the industry from sheep to cattle to the finished product. We are getting exposed to what these ranches actually look like in full operation.

Taylor Riel
Current ANS student



Going on this Summer Industry Tour has given me so many new perspectives in agriculture and has showed me the variety of career opportunities that agriculture offers.

Joyce Worley
Current ANS student

This trip has easily been one of the best experiences I have had during my undergraduate career and has opened my eyes to the vast opportunities across the industry.

Rebecca Lyons
Current ANS student



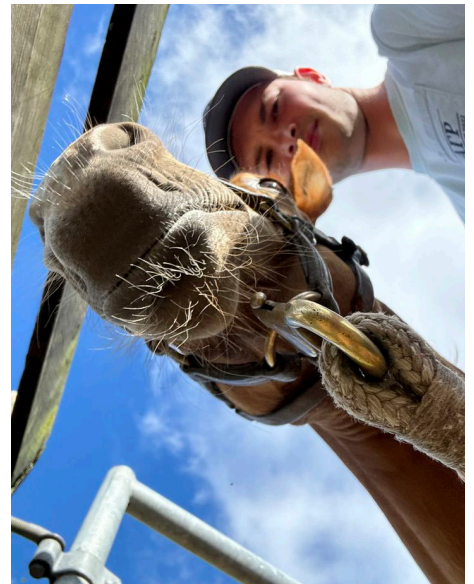


FOAL HANDLING PRACTICUM

By Justin Callaham

The University of Florida's Equine Program is making strides in equine education by offering students a unique, hands-on learning experience that guides young horses from birth to their final training and eventual sale. This comprehensive, multi-semester approach ensures that each horse is well prepared as a ranch or show prospect, while also providing students with invaluable real-world experience.

The program begins with a foaling class, where students witness the birth of foals and begin their education in horse development. From there, the foals enter a specialized foal handling practicum, where students introduce them to essential skills such as grooming, bathing, haltering, leading, and picking up their feet. Upon completion of the practicum, these young horses then advance to courses in Weanling Behavior Modification and Horse Psychology and Training.





Each spring, the program culminates in the annual 2-year-old performance horse sale, a capstone event that showcases the hard work and dedication of UF's equine students, faculty, and staff. The sale is also a significant event for graduating seniors who have followed these horses throughout their development. The program breeds, trains, and sells 16 to 20 horses each year, with the proceeds reinvested into furthering UF's horse production program.

Through this immersive process, students gain a deep understanding of horse breeding, training, and sales, equipping them with the skills needed to excel in the equine industry.



2024 FLORIDA CATTLEMEN'S CONVENTION

By Matti Moyer

The UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences (ANS) attended the 2024 Florida Cattlemen's Convention and Allied Trade Show from June 18 to 20. Faculty, staff, and ANS club members from the Gator Collegiate Cattlewomen and UF Block and Bridle clubs attended and participated in a variety of activities. The ANS department participated in a career bingo for the Junior Florida Cattlemen's Association (JFCA) members, integrating the

different operations and businesses within the FCA trade show. We also spoke with JFCA students about our Animal Sciences degree program, pathways to UF, career options as Animal Sciences students, and how to get involved in the department. Our Have You HERD program was a big highlight with these students as we shared the application and process for this upcoming year.



Additionally, the ANS department hosted another successful Big Loop Dummy Roping and Merck King of the Ranch Competition. Our ANS club members remained active in FCA business and committee meetings by collecting minutes for each of the committees as well as helping with registration and selling FCA merchandise. The Gator Collegiate CattleWomen attended the FCA breakfast, where they heard Becky Finley speak on her journey as 2023-24 Florida Cattlewomen's president. Awards were presented to the members and leadership of Florida Cattlewomen, including the Outstanding Gator Collegiate Cattlewomen of the Year award

that was given to Eddith Cortes, the club's spring 2024 president.

Finally, we successfully completed the IFAS Research Update Meeting and announced the formation of the Jim Handley Endowed Professorship of Beef Cattle Sciences. This \$1 million gift provides programmatic support to a faculty member leading a program aligned with the research and teaching priorities of the Florida beef industry. The UF Foundation has already received pledges for the majority of the gift, with only a short distance to go.



Have You HERD

By Savannah Linzmaier

The Animal Sciences department had another successful semester of the Have You HERD program! This past spring, seven more high school students spent an individualized day in the department.

The spring 2024 Have you HERD students were:

- Isabella Carrillo
- Drew Parkinson
- Rylee Skillman
- Georgia Hough
- Reagan Hancock
- Izabella Moss
- Cris Arellano

The Have You HERD program is specifically designed for high school students with a deep interest in animal agriculture and a desire to pursue a major in Animal Sciences at the University of Florida. By offering an individualized experience, the program connects students with invaluable resources and serves as a stepping stone for their potential academic and professional pursuits in the animal industry.

These students shadowed current Animal Sciences students and ambassadors, sat in on ANS lectures and labs, and had their first college academic advising appointment.

“I learned so many different things such as carcass quality, yield grade, scrotal circumference, hip height, and everything I need to know about getting into UF,” said Moss. “I appreciate everything all of the advisors, professors, ambassadors, and students have done for me today. This program is amazing!”

The firsthand experience the program offers is crucial to helping students make informed decisions about their education and future careers. We are excited to enter the third year of the Have You HERD program this 2024–25 academic year!



Learn more about the Have You HERD student program by visiting: <https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/students/have-you-herd/>



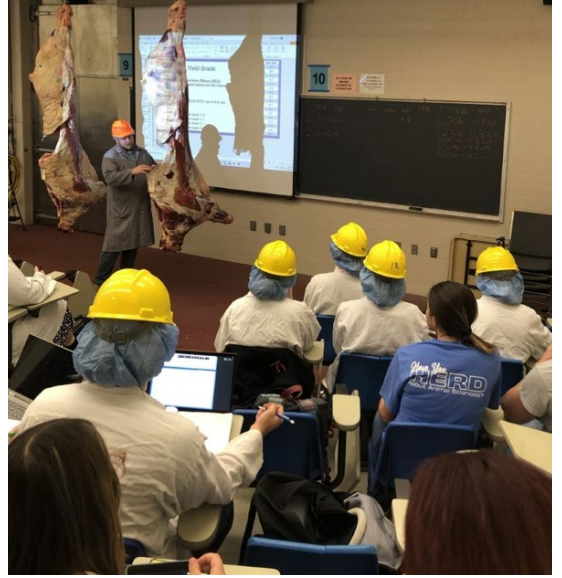
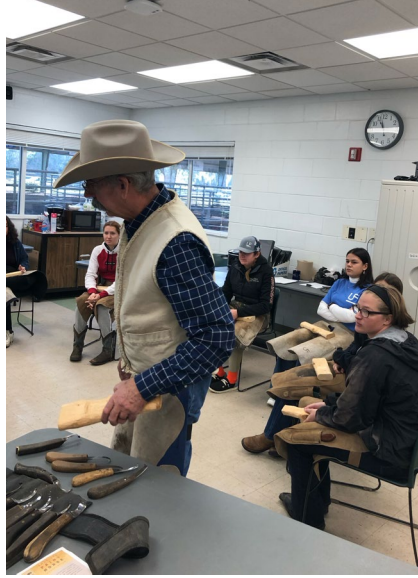
CRIS ARELLANO



DREW PARKINSON



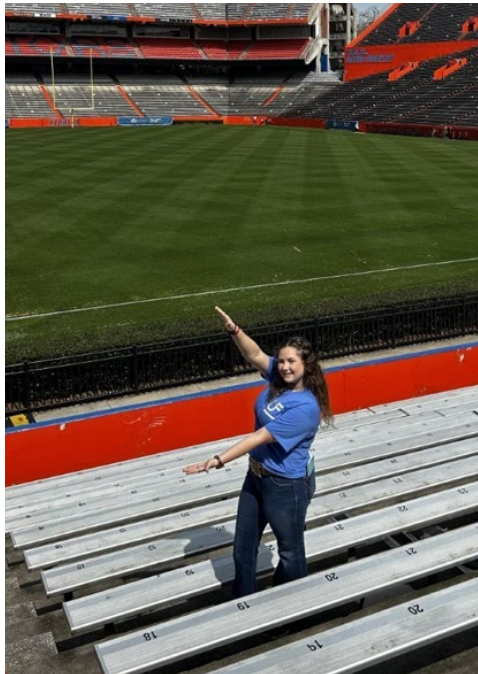
ISABELLA CARRILLO



RYLEE SKILLMAN



IZABELLA MOSS



REAGAN HANCOCK



GEORGIA HOUGH

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Gabriel Zayas won the **Baker-Cundiff Award** and placed first in the **2024 Beef Improvement Federation meeting poster competition**



Dr. Todd Thrift received the **2024 Beef Improvement Federation's Continuing Service Award** as well as the **2024 Florida Cattlemen's Association Researcher of the Year Award**



Fahad Rafiq won a **Travel Scholarship** at the **2024 Beef Improvement Federation meeting**



Eddith Cortes was awarded **Florida Cattlemen's Convention Outstanding Gator Collegiate Cattlewoman of the Year**



Mariana Nehme Marinho won **first place** in the **Purina Animal Nutrition Ph.D. Student Poster Competition**



Cecilia Constantino Rocha was awarded **ANS Ph.D. Student of the Year 2024**



Spring 2023 ANS graduate **Dr. Usman Arshad** received the **National Milk Producers Federation Richard M. Hoyt Award** from the American Dairy Science Association



Quinn Hoorn was awarded **ANS M.S. Student of the Year 2024**



Giovanni C. Ladeira was awarded the **AG2PI Conference Travel Grant** and the **UF/IFAS Graduate Student Travel Grant** at the **2024 ASAS-CSAS-WSASAS Annual Meeting**



Luana Alvares won **first place** in the **Master's Student Poster Competition** during the **2024 ASAS-CSAS-WSASAS Annual Meeting**, and was also awarded the **AG2PI Conference Travel Grant** and the **James Davidson Graduate Travel Scholarship**



Dr. Jason Scheffler was promoted to **Associate Professor with Tenure** and has been appointed **ANS Undergraduate Coordinator**



Dr. Diwakar Vyas was promoted to **Associate Professor with Tenure**



Dr. Peter James Hansen was awarded **ANS Mentor of the Year 2024**



Dr. Antonio Faciola won the **Animal Industry Innovation Award** from the **American Society of Animal Science**



Dr. Feng Yue was awarded the **University of Florida Outstanding Assistant Professor Award**

ANIMAL SCIENCES GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION BOARD 2024-2025

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Debbie,
 It has been amazing working with you and learning so much. We have shared in so many forever memories together and I am forever grateful for them. Enjoy retirement & come see us sometimes - Jasmine

DEBBIE NAGY

By Adriana Barbat



Debbie Nagy retires September 30 from her role as Administrative Support Assistant II after 23 years with the Department of Animal Sciences, and more than 40 years with the University of Florida overall. Over her career, she has worked in clerical and administrative roles across campus, starting in 1981 with the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences. From there, she moved to General Physical Education, then Recreational Sports, before finally landing here at UF Animal Sciences in 2000.

Debbie had previously retired in 2016 after 35 years of service, receiving the traditional commem-

orative Florida rocking chair, as well as an engraved wall clock from Recreational Sports and a Service Recognition Award. She spent a year out of the office before returning to UF Animal Sciences. Going into her second retirement, she said the thing she will miss most is “all the great people I have had the privilege to work with and call friends.”

Looking ahead, Debbie said she doesn’t have major plans for her retirement but is excited about not having to wake up at 4:10 in the morning for her commute to work. Aside from sleeping in, she said she plans to increase caretaking responsibilities for her son, who is an adult with disabilities and is active in the Special Olympics as well as the Gainesville Health & Fitness FIT for ALL program for people with special needs. She also wants to spend more time visiting family — she has three sisters who live in North Central Florida, the youngest of whom still lives in the Duckpond house they grew up in, and some of her extended family still gathers every year for their family reunion. She and her sisters like to go to Christian concerts together; their next one will be For King & Country, who she’ll be seeing live for the fourth time in October.

Debbie,
 I have big shoes to fill! I am honored to say you are a friend. You are always there when I have dumb questions about anything. I wish you all the best in your “retirement years” (yeah right) you will be into something I am sure!! I will miss you.
 Connie

Debbie,
 I could never tell you thank you enough for how you stepped into me as a new hire! I admire how hard you work and how much you care about those around you. You have been such a huge part in the success here at AAS! ENJOY retirement!
 ♥ Matti

Debbie,
 No words can express what you have meant to me here at Animal Sciences! You helped me get hired and have taught me so much! I am proud to call you my friend!! You will be so missed and I am jealous!!! Enjoy Retirement!
 Tracy

Debbie, After I accepted the offer to work here, I decided to stop by one day and check the place out. You were my introduction to the office and made me feel welcome. My first few months it was only me and you in here. I enjoyed our conversations and learning about the dept. from you. 42 years is a lot of time and dedication to put into one place of employment. Your final retirement is well deserved and I hope you enjoy spending time with your family. You will be missed.
 Hal

RETIRES (AGAIN!)

By Staci Vining

I met Debbie as the first “live” smiling face when I came to the Department in 2021. At that time, the majority of staff were working remote due to Covid. She was reporting to the office and helped me learn my way around the department. She was instrumental in making me feel welcome. Debbie embraced the change of a new supervisor, new processes, new office dynamics, hybrid work schedules, and new staff like the leader she is. The institutional knowledge she contributes to the Business Office is very impactful to our success, however her people knowledge is where she shines! Debbie is highly regarded by our faculty and it is easy to see why. She truly cares about their success and is happy to go above and beyond to make things happen. Debbie is truly a team player and is

always happy to help show our new folks the ropes. The thing I will miss most about Debbie, is Debbie. She has a truly caring heart and I am fortunate to call her a friend. My favorite memory of Debbie is the Holiday season 2021. We participated in the Door Decorating contest with the highest level of enthusiasm and creativity, it was an amazing display of the team spirit we had cultivated. When we did not win the contest, it was Debbie that reached out to one of the judges to find out the reason why! THAT IS TEAM SPIRIT and I loved it!

I hope Debbie knows the impact she made on the Department of Animal Sciences, the appreciation we have for her dedication and contributions to the Department and that we EXPECT her to visit often! WE LOVE YOU DEBBIE!

Debbie, I know you've been a treat to work with. I look forward to seeing you back in the future when you come to visit us! Until then, enjoy sleeping in, hanging with the family, and the freedom of doing whatever you want!
♥ Adriana

Debbie -
Without us, who is going to help you keep up with your purse, keys & phone? LOL
Staci

Hi Debbie, you are only the best that I have worked with. I know retirement will look good on you. Many blessings, Renee

Debbie,
Writing this note is so better sweet for me. I am so happy for you and your future endeavors but I am also going to miss you bunches. You have taught me so much this last year and I am grateful to have had you to turn to for guidance. Now who am I going to turn to for my mistakes and stupid questions? Haha! Enjoy your retirement. You earned it. *always,*
- You better stop in to see *Megan* us sometimes

Hi Debbie,
Thank you for being my most helpful business office connection. I have depended on your assistance, and I am better for it. Enjoy the time you will now have for non-secretarial + non-fiscal tasks.
Kam

ANS CLUBS & TEAMS UPDATE

Scan the QR codes to hear from our student leaders on the accomplishments of the 2023–24 academic year!

Horse Judging Team



Academic Quadrathlon



ANS Ambassadors



Meat Judging Team



Equestrian Club



Dairy Science Club



Block and Bridle Club



Gator Collegiate Cattlewomen

