

Have You **HERD**

UF/IFAS DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES
NEWSLETTER VOL. 13 | SPRING 2025



PHOTO BY FLORIDA SPIRIT TEAM



UF/IFAS
DEPARTMENT OF
ANIMAL SCIENCES

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear alumni, friends, and supporters,

I am excited to share with you the Spring 2025 edition of our Have You HERD newsletter.

As another successful academic year comes to a close, this is a time to celebrate our students, faculty, and partners whose hard work and dedication continue to drive the mission of the Department of Animal Sciences forward.

This spring, we hosted two of our most highly anticipated annual events. The 36th Annual Florida Ruminant Nutrition Symposium brought together experts, students, and industry professionals to discuss innovative strategies in ruminant nutrition. Most recently, we welcomed participants to the 74th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course, a cornerstone of our Extension programming and a vital platform for advancing best practices in Florida’s beef industry. In addition to academic and Extension highlights, we are proud to report a record-breaking year for our Horse, Bull, and Heifer Sales. These sales are not only critical to our teaching, research and extension missions but also reflect the strength of our programs and the trust our stakeholders place in us.

This issue features groundbreaking research from Dr. Antonio Faciola’s lab on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in dairy cattle. His team is investigating a novel feed additive that may lower methane production during digestion. In addition to its environmental benefits, this approach could also improve feed efficiency and boost milk production—an important step toward more sustainable and productive dairy farming.

This semester, we celebrated a major milestone in faculty recognition. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo and Dr. Todd Thrift on receiving newly endowed professorships. These prestigious honors reflect their exceptional contributions to research, teaching, and extension—and they also underscore the remarkable generosity of our stakeholders. Through their continued support, our donors are helping to elevate the impact of our faculty and strengthen the future of our department.

We wrapped up the semester with ANS Celebration Day, a joyful event recognizing student achievements and milestones. For the first time, we also presented the ANS Sustaining Industry Partner Award to Don Bennink and Carol Postley. Through their sustained efforts, they have strengthened our relationships with students, farmers, ranchers, and the allied industry, fostering a multi-generational impact on our department and industries we serve.

Finally, congratulations to all our Spring 2025 graduates. You leave the University of Florida equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values that will serve you well in the years ahead. One of the highlights of my semester is standing on stage and shaking each of your hands. We have one of the largest groups of graduates and this opportunity always reminds me of the hard work, growth, and determination that brought you to this point. We’re proud of all you’ve accomplished and excited to see how you will shape the future of animal agriculture.

Thank you for your continued support—whether through financial giving, offering internships and employment, or simply sharing your time and wisdom with our students. If you are interested in learning more about ways to give, please visit <https://give.ifas.ufl.edu/animal-sciences-giving/>, or reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,

John Arthington
Professor and Chair



John Arthington
PROFESSOR & CHAIR

HAVE YOU HERD

By Savannah Linzmaier

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.

Over the past academic year, we have brought 12 prospective students through this program:

FALL 2024

Brielle Martinez
Emma Boisclair
Kaley Brown
Katelyn Evans
Lexie Lyons
Lilly Larson

SPRING 2025

Brett Hunt
Janae James
Joseph Brown
Libby Justice
Uriel Berman
Sarah Beth Rutherford

My experience with the Have you HERD Program was PERFECT! All of my questions were answered and then some. Everyone was so open and extremely helpful! Having this experience was perfect, and it makes me want to attend the Animal Sciences Program even more!

Sarah Beth Rutherford

All students and staff were beyond kind and welcoming. My Abuelos and I learned so much about the Animal Science Department, what path to take to transfer to UF, and about meat science (something I never thought I would be so interested in).

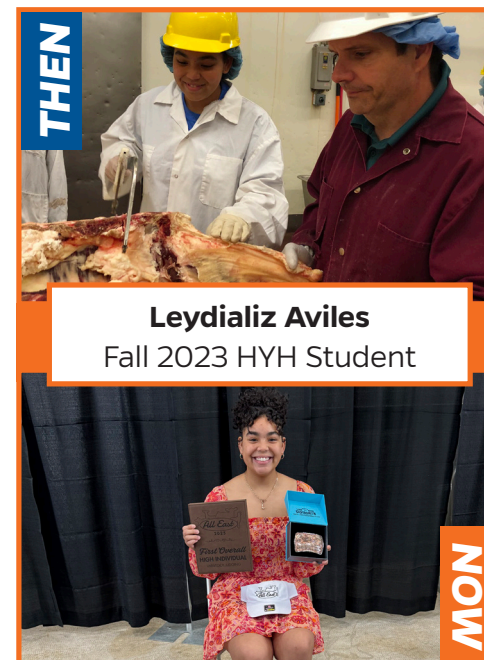
Brielle Martinez

Have You HERD Who's Here Now?

See where these Have You HERD students started their journey with UF Animal Sciences, and where they are today!



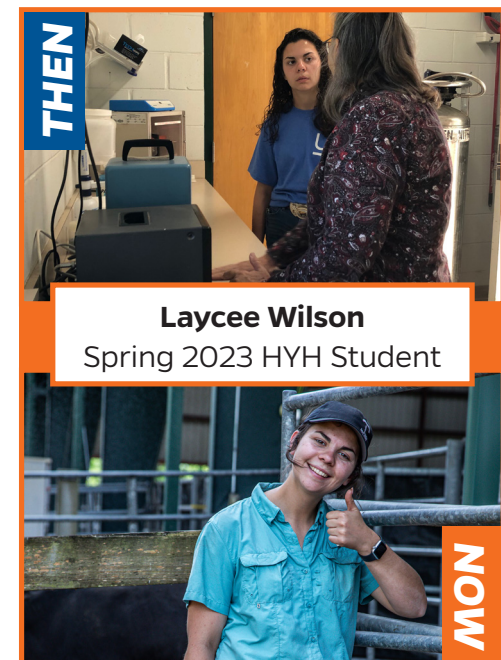
Hunter Taylor
Fall 2023 HYH Student



Leydializ Aviles
Fall 2023 HYH Student



McKenzie Locke
Fall 2023 HYH Student



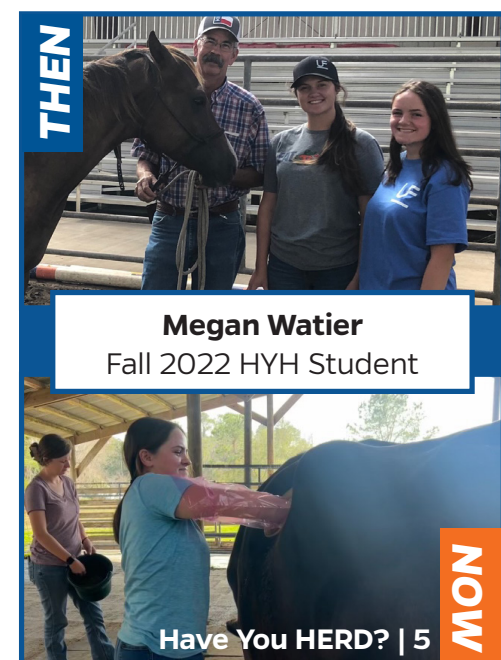
Laycee Wilson
Spring 2023 HYH Student



Kayden Duncan
Fall 2023 HYH Student



Isabella Puga
Spring 2023 HYH Student



Megan Watier
Fall 2022 HYH Student

HYH Fall 2025–Spring 2026 Application

Applications due August 15, 2025

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



36TH ANNUAL RUMINANT NUTRITION SYMPOSIUM

By Adriana Barbat

The 36th annual Florida Ruminant Nutrition Symposium, held February 24 to 26 at the Best Western Gateway Grand in Gainesville, FL, welcomed visitors from across the country and around the world.

This year's conference kicked off with a mini-symposium sponsored by Balchem Animal Nutrition. This portion of the event focused on beef on dairy, a breeding practice that is common outside of the U.S. but has recently garnered significant interest within the country as a way to increase the value of calves in dairy farms and quality of beef.

Tuesday morning's pre-conference, sponsored by Perdue Agribusiness, focused on gastrointestinal function and health. The remainder of the Symposium focused on topics that included mineral metabolism, forage quality, baby calf nutrition, and beef carcass traits with a focus on crossbreeding impacts.

"The U.S. beef herd is at the smallest number in terms of beef cows in a long time," said Dr. José Santos, organizer of the symposium and Professor of Dairy Cattle Nutrition and Reproduction at the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences. "The market for beef is heated, so there is interest in that."

Dr. Santos has been involved with organizing the event since joining the department in 2008. The event was smaller in those days, spanning just one day with limited attendance and a limited program.

Working with Dr. Charlie Staples, who led the effort in organizing the symposium before his passing in 2019, Dr. Santos introduced the Tuesday morning sponsored pre-conference, which brings three to four additional speakers to present on topics chosen by the sponsor. Dr. Santos and Dr. Staples later teamed up with Balchem Animal Nutrition to add the Monday mini-symposium, expanding the event in 2014 to the 2.5-day symposium that it is today.

The symposium's expansion, as well as its broad international reach, are a product of the relationships that UF Animal Sciences faculty have built over the years. With about 280 attendees, it was one of the highest-turnout events in the symposium's history. This year, the event saw guests from 21 states in the U.S. and 17 countries.



PHOTO CREDIT: SAVANNAH LINZMAIER

The international spirit of the event was also reflected in the selection of this year's guest speakers, who traveled from across the country as well as from Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Australia.

Presenters included international industry experts, major Agribusiness representatives such as Balchem and Perdue, Animal Sciences department faculty Drs. Albert De Vries, Diwakar Vyas, and Bob Cousins, and department Ph.D. students Masroor Sagheer and Lais de Oliveira Lima, who had the opportunity to present their major research findings.

"This has been a wonderful partnership with industry. We had contributions from 13 sponsors," Dr. Santos said. "We can only bring this quality of people because of the support from private industry partners, who have been very generous to our program."

Dr. Santos said his favorite talks were those by Dr. Robert Cousins, a member of the National Academy of Sciences who made major contributions to understanding the role of zinc in mammal nutrition, and Dr. David Fraser, a member of

the prestigious Order of Australia whose early work identified the major active metabolite of Vitamin D, 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3. "To listen to people who made major scientific discoveries is just a treat," he said.

One of the big highlights of the symposium every year is the poolside Brazilian barbecue, cooked by Dr. João Bittar and Dr. Santos himself.

"This year, even with rain, we cooked," Dr. Santos said, thanking Drs. Fernanda Batistel, Nicolas DiLorenzo, Diwakar Vyas, Corwin Nelson, and João Bittar, as well as the department's graduate students and communications team, for their help organizing and running the event.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. JOSE SANTOS

GATOR GRILL MASTERS

By Matti Moyer

This semester, our department hosted 12 participants in our 4th Gator Grill Masters event. There is a lot of questionable information out there about livestock production, food safety, labeling, and nutrition. “We wanted to create an opportunity for people to come in and get answers to their questions, demonstrate concepts, and have some fun. The goal is to increase consumer confidence in their purchasing decisions and ability to produce a delicious meal,” said Dr. Jason Scheffler, program coordinator.

This program was initially funded by a Florida Cattle Enhancement Board grant. Moving forward, we see this as a core program with the opportunity to spin off additional educational sessions. Dr. Scheffler sees potential for a multi-day program featuring barbecue or a shorter program geared toward Friday night tailgaters. He also has interest in developing an educational program for students who may have limited cooking experience. Dr. Scheffler and his team plan to connect with retailers that sell grills (Lowe’s, Home Depot, Ace Hardware, Bass Pro Shops, etc.) and grocery stores like Publix that sell meat to support the program’s growth.

Participant experiences below demonstrate the importance and success of the program. We would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Jason Scheffler, Dr. Tracy Scheffler, Dr. Chad Carr, and Kyle Mendes for their hard work and dedication to this program!

What did attendees have to say about their experience?

“Coming into this course today, I really did not know what to expect, but it was an awesome learning experience. I am also so glad I was fed all day. Thanks for doing such a good job explaining concepts in a clear and concise way.”

“Hats off to our amazing group of staff. The vast and varied amount of knowledge they have and were willing to share was greatly appreciated.”

“Enjoyed everything—didn’t expect all the great meat! Fantastic!!”

“I will definitely enjoy putting what I have learned into practice. I have often shied away from grilling due to lack of confidence, that is changing now with new knowledge and practice! Thanks so much for an excellent presentation!”

MEET THE MEATS TEAM



Dr. Chad Carr
Professor & State Extension
Meat Specialist



Kyle Mendes
Lecturer -
Meat Science



Dr. Jason Scheffler
Associate Professor - Food Safety
& Undergraduate Coordinator




Dr. Tracy Scheffler
Associate Professor -
Muscle Biology



Thachary Mayer
Graduate Student -
Meat Science


HIGHLIGHTS IN COMMUNICATIONS

SPRING SEMESTER ANALYTICS: SOCIAL MEDIA



@uf_ansci
95,234 Views
3,528 Interactions
190 New Followers
2,612 Total Followers

Top Instagram Post
262 interactions
3,779 Views



uf_ansci

View insights

Boost post

249 Likes 7 Comments 6 Shares

Liked by ansley_bo and others

uf_ansci Our next Senior Spotlight goes to Emma Paliotta! Emma is graduating with an Equine specialization and plans to obtain a master's in agribusiness to start her own... more

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UF Department of Animal Sciences
1,096 posts 2,612 followers 130 following

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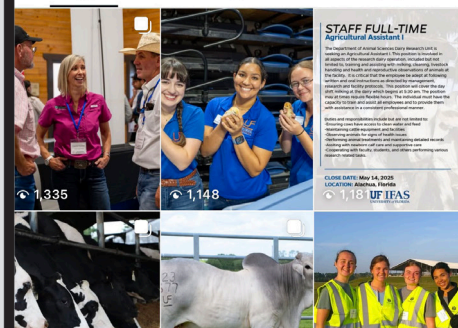
New

Story Takeo...


Ambassadors

Ambassadors

#FDDF



UF Animal Sciences Department



UF Animal Sciences Department
7.7K likes · 9.7K followers

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UF Animal Sciences Department
175.9K Views
91.7K Reach
208 New Followers
9.7K Total Followers

Top Facebook Post
20,404 Views
13,693 Reach
158 Interactions



UF Animal Sciences Department

74th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course is just ONE MONTH away!

We are very excited to welcome all attendees for an incredible event! This will be a great experience and we are ready to hear from our amazing speakers and experts! Check out the agenda and other information using this link: <https://buff.ly/ufnvv9>

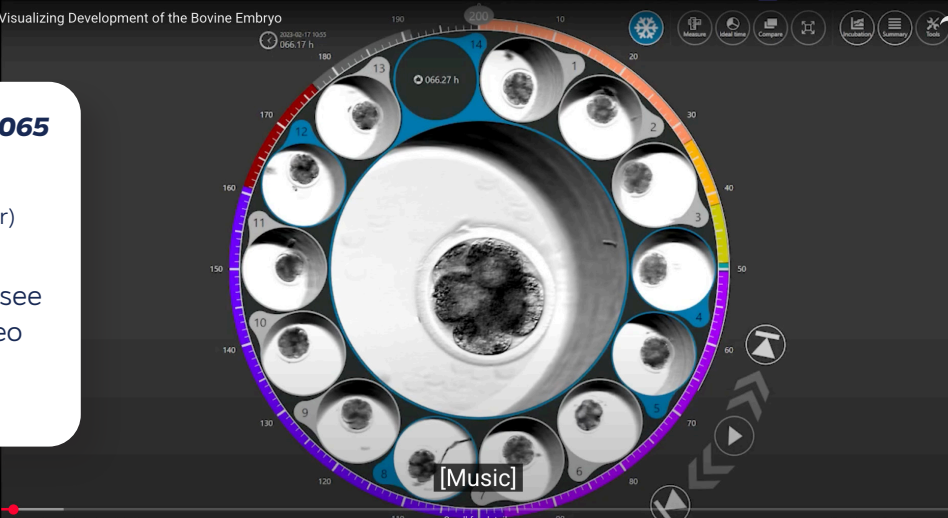
We can't wait to see you there! 🐮👋

See insights and ads

134 Likes 1 Comment 23 Shares

Boost post

Top YouTube Video: Visualizing Development of the Bovine Embryo





@ufanimalsciences2065
232 Subscribers (all time)
45 Videos (all time)
19 Videos (Spring Semester)



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@uf_ansci
4,126 Views
80% Follower Increase
147 Engagement



Top X Post

February 5, 2025 12:00pm



New Blog Post! Dr. Emily Miller-Cushon has received the prestigious Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers! Read more about her using this link: <https://buff.ly/4iAea8d> Congratulations to Dr.

Impressions	Engagements	Favorites
458	24	11
Replies	Retweets	Clicks
1	2	6
Engagement Rate		
5.20%		

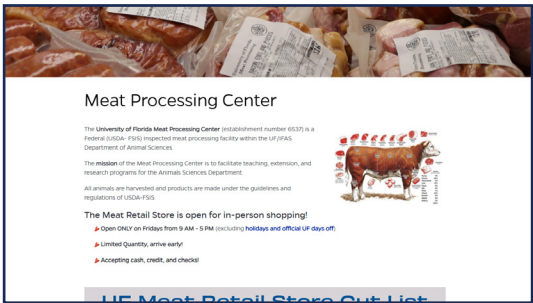
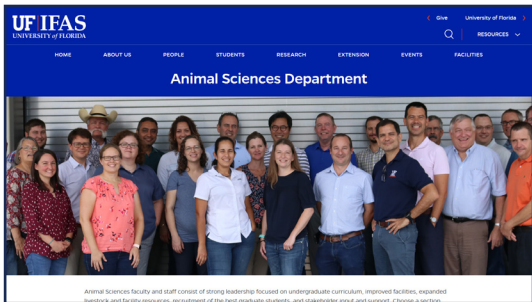
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HIGHLIGHTS IN COMMUNICATIONS

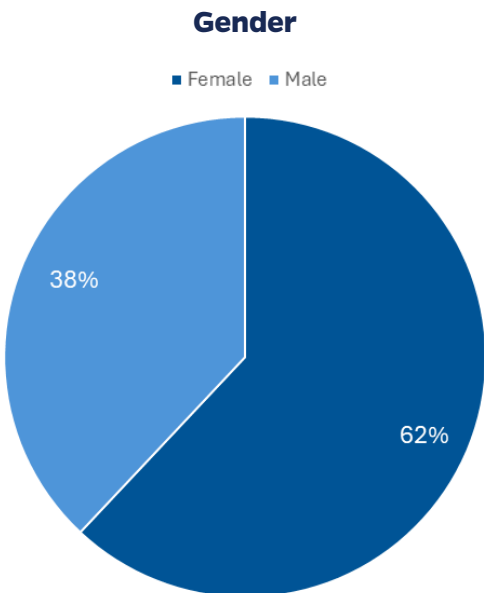
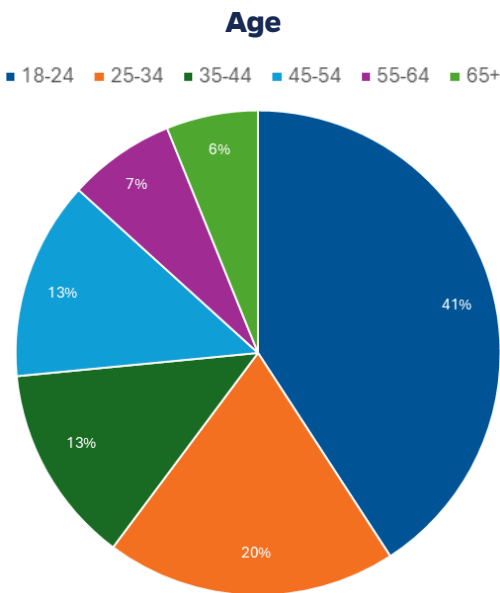
SPRING SEMESTER ANALYTICS: WEBSITE

WEBPAGE VIEWS

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu | 7,764 |
| 2. https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/facilities/meat-processing-center/ | 6,215 |
| 3. https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/people | 3,089 |



VISITOR ACTIVITY



COURSE SPOTLIGHT: RANCH HORSE MANAGEMENT

By Savannah Linzmaier

ANS 3239L: Ranch Horse Management is a two-credit course that is designed to give students a hands-on opportunity to practice techniques used in the equine and cattle industries. The class is a blend of horsemanship and cattle handling, teaching students about how horses are utilized by cow-calf, stocker, and feedlot operations. Mr. Joel McQuagge and Mr. Jesse Savell instruct the class and have historically taught it in odd spring semesters.

Carlie Batey, a new transfer student in the Animal Sciences, Food Animal Specialization, was one of the six students enrolled in the course this spring. “The Ranch Horse Management class is different from any other class I have taken because it is so hands-on,” said Batey. “No matter what we were learning about, we applied it instantly. We were able to learn about and practice those skills that are necessary on a beef cattle operation.”

Students who wish to enroll in this course must have a serious interest in the beef cattle industry and prior horseback riding experience. Over the course of the semester, they cover topics like horse safety, tack selection, horse nutrition, hoof care, cattle behavior, trailering and hauling, roping techniques, sorting and moving cattle, and roping and doctoring in the pasture.



Students then work with horses and cattle, directly applying the topics they’ve learned about.

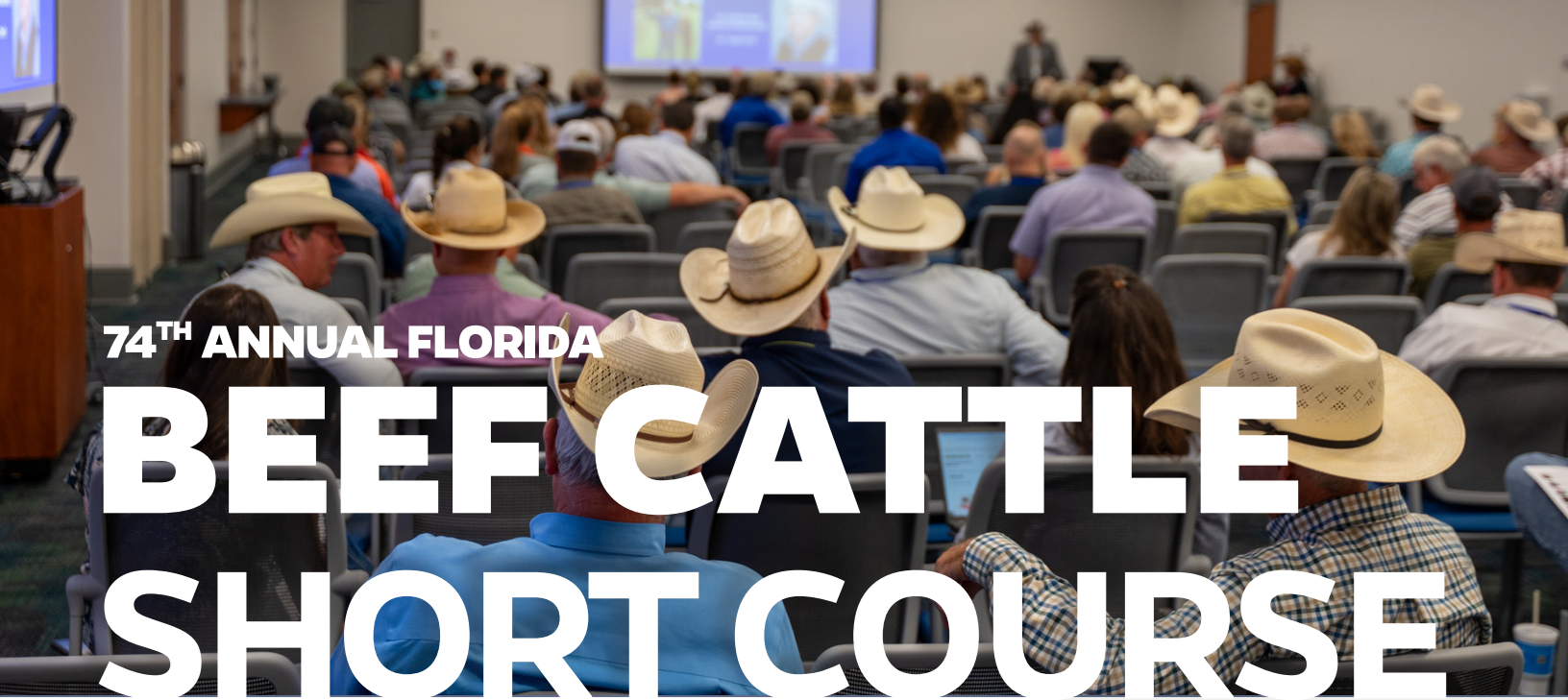
One of the most valuable components of the course is the “Ranch Horse Trip.” This spring, the class visited some of Texas’s most prominent cattle and horse operations, including the 6666 Ranch, Pitchfork Ranch, and Valley Equine—Batey’s favorite stop of the tour.

“Valley Equine was incredible. It’s a prestigious equine breeding facility in Stephenville, TX. They manage the industry’s finest stallions—Metallic Cat, Hashtags, Rollz Royce, and Third Edge, to name just a few!”

The combination of practical skills, teamwork, and industry exposure cultivates personal growth. “Both the class and our trip to Texas enhanced my undergraduate experience in multiple ways,” said Batey. “The lifelong friendships I have made with my classmates and the mentorship I got from Mr. McQuagge and Mr. Savell is something that I will cherish forever. Being able to better myself in lifelong skills during the semester made me look forward to what each new week brought, while also making Gainesville feel more like home.”

Batey plans to have her own beef cattle operation in the future and she says that she will use each skill she learned in this class. Courses like this are what make the UF Animal Sciences a unique UF program!





74TH ANNUAL FLORIDA BEEF CATTLE SHORT COURSE

By Matti Moyer

The 74th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course was concluded on May 9. This year's short course, "Riding the High Tide," welcomed 270 attendees to learn more about decision making in a record cattle market. We heard from nine out-of-state speakers, some of our own outstanding faculty members, seasoned cattle producers from across the state, and experts representing 94 years of combined experience in grazing research. We were also honored to present the very first Animal Sciences Bull Gator award to Mr. Jim Handley, past Florida Cattlemen's Association Executive Vice President. Our department is so thankful for all of the hard work and efforts that Mr. Handley, the Florida Cattlemen's Association, and the Florida Cattle Enhancement Board have provided. This short course would not have been possible without the efforts of the Beef Cattle Short Course Committee, 18 sponsors, and our 28 on-site volunteers. We look forward to next year's 75th Annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course and are excited to celebrate the longevity of this Extension program!

For more information about the short course, visit <https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/events/beef-cattle-short-course/>.



BRAHMAN BULL & HEIFER SALE

By Todd Thrift

On May 9, the University of Florida hosted our 6th annual Bull & Heifer sale on Cattle in Motion. There were over 3,000 views, with a total of 1,128 bids from three different states. The 15 bulls were in great demand and averaged \$7,233. The 16 yearling heifers averaged \$4,844. The high-selling bull (Lot 9) sold to Saucer 7 Ranch of Bagwell, TX, for \$19,100. The high-selling yearling heifer (Lot 31) went to S4 Brahmans in Evergreen, LA, for \$10,300. Coincidentally, these two lots were full siblings, and both were record highs for our annual sale. The volume buyer was Indian Prairie Canal Cattle Company of Okeechobee, FL, with the purchase of three heifers and one bull. Proceeds from this sale go to support our teaching, research, and Extension programs in the Department of Animal Sciences.



Scan the QR code to view the sale catalog!



2025 SEEDSTOCK STUDENTS

Whitley Mobley
John Presley
Isabella Puga
Ralph Sans
Kaden Sparkman
Colby Walter
Tyler Watson

Melissa Babinecz
Jordyn Brekke
Kensley Greene
Emma Hale
Dina Hassan
Nathan Hughes
Tanner Leturno



Check out the bull and heifer sale videos on YouTube!

Better feed, fewer burps:

UF SCIENTISTS TARGET DAIRY GAS EMISSIONS

By Meredith Bauer, UF/IFAS Communications

University of Florida researchers are testing a new type of cattle feed that could help dairy cows release less methane gas from burps and flatulence and use nutrients more efficiently. Because methane traps heat in the atmosphere, reducing these emissions could make dairy farming more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Researchers, led by Antonio Faciola, looked at a potential dairy cattle supplementary feed made of flaxseed and pea protein. The study was published this month in the Journal of Dairy Science.

Methane, a potent greenhouse gas, is naturally emitted by cows during digestion, and cows are significant sources of methane worldwide, especially from their burps. When cows' stomachs make methane, they lose valuable energy that could otherwise be used to make milk or meat. By feeding them in a way that reduces methane output, researchers might be able to help the cow produce more milk while also chasing climate goals.

"It's a win-win situation. Every time we reduce methane, we keep that energy in the cow's body," said Faciola, associate professor at UF's Department of Animal Sciences.

University of Alaska research assistant professor and former UF post-doctoral student James Vinyard was critical to the study, he said. Vinyard simulated dairy cattle's digestion in the lab to see how much methane was produced and to examine possibilities of improving that fermentation by adding a supplemental feed.

The researchers added the flaxseed and pea protein supplement to the dairy cattle's rumen in a lab and measured how fermentation changed. The supplement, rich in omega-3 fatty acids and proteins, reduced methane production and improved overall digestion, he said.



"This supplement has multiple potential benefits," Faciola said. "Not only could it reduce methane emissions, but it might also increase energy availability for cows, potentially leading to increased milk production."

Future studies will include feeding the supplement to dairy cows to see if the lab results match with what happens in the field.

With food security becoming increasingly important concerns, he emphasized the importance of feeding cows more efficiently to meet growing global demands.

"We will need to have cows producing more milk with the same amount of food," he said. "We have to be more efficient to feed more people."

The study was funded in part by O&T Farms Ltd., a Canadian farm that produces animal supplements.

UF Represented in the National Dairy Challenge for the First Time in Over a Decade

By Jenna Larson

The North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge, established in 2002, aims to provide educational, professional growth, and networking outlets for students, dairy producers and other personnel. The 2025 contest was held in Gainesville, Florida and four UF students, fueled with passion and a little bit of curiosity, jumped on the opportunity to compete.

The UF team consisted of students with varied dairy-related experiences from research, consulting, exhibition and judging: all of these unique skills complemented one another and resulted in a big pay-off in the end! Team members included Angelina Fernandez, Jenna Larson, Rebecca Lyons, and Abby Michnowicz. Students were recruited through the Dairy Farm Evaluation class and the UF Dairy Science Club and practiced extensively throughout the spring semester by studying and applying dairy economics, management and emerging research. Though our Gators were well-prepared, they had no idea of the competition they would be up against: they soon learned that most teams were all seniors in college who had completed multiple hands-on internships and studied for a year in advance! While the UF students experienced some intimidation, this comparison only pushed them further toward success!

On Sunday night, the team was given access to the host farm's data that they would later be evaluating in-person. Reviewing the data revealed evidence for potential issues in management and problematic production patterns. This helped students organize priorities for the physical visit. On Monday, the UF students headed to Southern Cross Dairy to act as consultants and identify issues limiting productivity.

Once back to Gainesville, the teams had 5 hours to develop a comprehensive presentation that gave a management and business overview of the farm and discussed 3 areas of opportunity to increase farm revenue. Each opportunity was accompanied with a partial budget where students used research figures to estimate the cost of implementing a change and how much money it would generate for the producer. On Tuesday, the team presented their findings and answered questions from a panel of industry experts.

The UF undergraduate team finished 3rd in Panel B: an impressive finish for this group of trailblazer students!

Besides the students' accomplishments, the University of Florida was well-represented in other respects. The UF Dairy Research Unit was utilized as a host dairy for the Academy, where non-competing students could learn about dairy management practices. Several UF faculty and graduate students volunteered to share their expertise with students from around the country. Also, Dr. Albert De Vries, UF faculty member and coach of the 2025 team, was honored for his continued service to the Dairy Challenge and received the "Founder Award."

While the Gator Men's Basketball Team was busy breaking records in Texas, claiming the NCAA Championship Title, these four students represented the Gator Nation exceptionally on the home turf in the Swamp! Animal Science students, like these four, continue to strive for excellence and prove why it is truly "great to be a Florida Gator!"



Sale IN THE Swamp

By Joel McQuagge



UF BET SHES CATTY



UF JUSTKEEP SWIMMING

Ranch Horses Dominate a Record 2025 Sale in the Swamp

On May 3, the University of Florida's Department of Animal Sciences closed out an online auction with Chad and Angela Johnson of Affinity Auction Group. Fifteen started two-year-olds and two three-year-olds sold for a program record \$223,300. The sale average was \$13,135. The high-selling horse was the filly **UF Bet Shes Catty** (Bet Hesa Cat x UF Jesses Gal) for \$25,600. The reserve high-seller was the gelding **UF Justkeep Swimming** (Quahadi x Go For Nick) for \$20,800. The horses in this year's sale were bred by students in the Reproductive Management practicum, foaled by students in the Foaling practicum, halter broken and handled by the Weanling Handling class, and started under saddle by the Horse Psychology and Training class.

ANIMAL SCIENCES CELEBRATION DAY

By Meg Alexander

On April 25, 2025, The Animal Sciences Department held our Senior Luncheon, Scholarship Banquet, and Awards Banquet. ANS Celebration Day allows us to fellowship with our outstanding students, faculty, and staff to celebrate their accomplishments throughout their undergraduate studies.



The **Senior Luncheon** allows our advisors and faculty to celebrate our graduating class's achievements and wish them well in their future endeavors. Our department provided a catered meal and spent some time discussing everyone's plans following graduation. From attending graduate or veterinary school, to taking an enriching gap, or "growth" year, to working in many other sectors like sales or food safety, our seniors have exciting futures ahead and we are so proud of their hard work. Our faculty and staff shared some "life advice," like taking the opportunity to travel, building a good support system, or simply being kind. We are grateful for this time with our seniors and look forward to seeing them excel no matter where life takes them.



The Animal Sciences **Awards Banquet** provides a time of special recognition for our ANS clubs, teams, and top students. During our pre-ceremony social hour, the department recognized our first Sustaining Industry Partners. Recipients of this award have served as long-time supporters of teaching, research, and Extension within our department, and we are so grateful for their dedication to advancing the University of Florida Department of Animal Sciences. This year's recipients were Don Bennink and Carol Postley. During the club and team awards banquet, students, family members, faculty, advisors, coaches, and club presidents shared a steak dinner and recognized their officers, teammates, and seniors with team and individual awards. Concluding the ceremony, the "Top ANS Students" were recognized for their hard work, including three juniors and five seniors.



The ANS **Scholarship Reception** recognizes our scholarship recipients for the year. Departmental scholarships are provided through both endowments and private donors to support students who are dedicated leaders and scholars and have strong professional ambitions in Animal Sciences. Families and donors joined our faculty and staff to celebrate these students and presented their scholarships for diligent efforts inside and outside of the classroom. This year, the department awarded a total of \$63,850 to 57 recipients.

Scan the QR code to hear from ANS students about their leadership and participation in our department!



TOP SENIORS & JUNIORS

By Amie Imler

These awards recognized several students who have been involved in teaching, research, and Extension, as well as our students who have excelled academically, demonstrated leadership, and had significant involvement while at the University of Florida and within the Animal Sciences Department. Our recipients are juniors or seniors who exemplify the department and college's core values of integrity, collaboration, and service.



JUNIORS

MELISSA BABINECZ

Initiative defines Melissa's impact across our department and beyond. She supports Florida's livestock industry through forage analysis and has contributed across animal agriculture as a member of the UF Meat Judging Team, a student assistant at the Meat Processing Center, and an exhibitor on the Brahman Show Team. Her internships with Cobb and Pilgrim's advanced broiler operations and research. Melissa also mentors peers, leads in Block and Bridle and the Poultry Science Club, and writes for the UF Undergraduate Law Review—earning second place for her analysis of Florida's cultivated meat ban. She exemplifies excellence, leadership, and service.

CHLOE COLE

Chloe has made impactful contributions across teaching, research, and community engagement in our department. As chair of UF Block and Bridle's Ropin' in the Swamp, she demonstrated strong leadership and fundraising skills. As Reporter for the Gator Collegiate CattleWomen, she promoted the beef industry through outreach. Chloe also volunteers with the Alachua County Youth Fair and Marion County Ag Ventures, supporting agricultural education. In the classroom, she's mentored students as a TA for two courses. This spring, she contributed to avian influenza research by monitoring poultry health—showcasing her dedication to public health and infectious disease management.

REBECCA LYONS

Rebecca has made a lasting impact through her excellence in teaching, Extension, and student engagement. As an Animal Sciences Ambassador and student leader, she's organized key events, expanded continuing education through the Florida International Dairy Academy, and led youth outreach efforts. She excels as a Teaching Assistant, Dairy Quizbowl captain, and ADSA Undergraduate Division officer. Rebecca is also active in Block and Bridle, the Equestrian Club, and Western Team. Her leadership in launching the 'Ewe and Me' program highlights her dedication to building community and advancing agriculture.

SENIORS

ISABELLE BEST

Isabelle Best has made outstanding contributions to Extension and youth education in the equine industry. As a member of UF's Horse Judging Team, she competed nationally and gave back by volunteering at 4-H and FFA clinics. A former 4-H member, she returned as a speaker and helped expand horse judging programs, including one at her high school. Isabelle's passion for mentoring youth exemplifies leadership and service. She will continue her journey at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine in August 2025.

FRED "I.V." CONE

Fred, known to many as "I.V.," found his passion for Animal Sciences after switching majors in 2023 and quickly made an impact. That same semester, he became a Teaching Assistant for the Intro to Animal Sciences Lab and was soon promoted to lead TA. He's mentored peers, managed rotations, and created a welcoming, engaging learning environment. Known for his humor, curiosity, and dedication, I.V. goes the extra mile to support students and TAs alike. He begins at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine in August 2025 with plans to pursue mixed animal practice.

IVANA HERNANDEZ-GARBATI

Ivana Hernandez-Garbati has made outstanding contributions to our research mission in Animal Sciences. Working in Dr. Lori Warren's Equine Nutrition Lab, she played a key role in all stages of research—from developing protocols to feeding horses and analyzing data. Her work led to a scientific abstract she'll present at the Equine Science Society Symposium this summer. Ivana also supported fellow students and conducted lab analyses, strengthening the broader research community. Her curiosity, dedication, and passion for discovery have made her a standout scholar and vital to advancing equine nutrition and serving industry stakeholders across Florida.



MORRILL ACT AWARD SENIORS

The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 was a transformative law that expanded access to practical education for the common people and advanced American agriculture. It established land-grant institutions like the University of Florida, which are unique for their threefold mission: teaching, research, and Extension. These institutions have driven innovation, supported rural communities, and helped shape the nation's food systems. Over 150 years later, this legacy remains central to UF's identity. To honor this tradition, our department created the Morrill Act Award, recognizing seniors who excel across all three mission areas and exemplify the spirit of service, scholarship, and leadership.

HANNAH POSTLEWAIT

For two summers, Hannah has been a vital part of our Equine Science group, mentoring youth as head coach at 4-H Horsemanship Camp and the State Horse Show. As captain of the UF Western Team and coach for Block and Bridle's Equine Team, she's built students' confidence and horsemanship skills. She's also excelled as a TA across multiple courses and contributed to ruminant nutrition research. A dedicated Ambassador, Hannah now heads to UF's College of Pharmacy to pursue a career in veterinary pharmacy.

HADLEY WIMSATT

Hadley has contributed over 300 hours to research in Dr. Mario Binelli's lab, focusing on reproductive physiology in Bos indicus-influenced cattle. Her honors thesis on accelerometer collar accuracy reflects her commitment to advancing livestock production. She's also served as a TA and Meat Science Quiz Bowl coach, and supported Extension programs like Gator Grill Masters. As President of the UF Equestrian Club, she earned top honors and led key initiatives. Hadley starts at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine in August 2025.

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Diwakar Vyas

2025 IFAS International Awards Early Career International Research Fellow



Angela Gonella Diaz

American Society of Animal Science Southern Section Outstanding Early Career Animal Scientist Award



Brad Daigneault

International Embryo Technology Society Foundation Early Career Achievement Award



Vinicius Izquierdo

UF 2024 Katherine Harms Graduate Publication Award

ASAS Southern Section PhD Three-Minute Thesis Student Competiton - 2nd Place



María Camila López Duarte

Honorable Mention for Madelyn Lokhart Dissertation Fellowship



Robert Belcher

2024-2025 College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Top Ten Senior Award



Arie Hendrik Havelaar

American Association for the Advancement Lifetime Fellow



Albert De Vries

National Dairy Challenge Founder Award



Peter J. Hansen

2025 International Embryo Technology Society Pioneer Award



Emily Miller-Cushon

Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers



Corwin Nelson

Chosen for Cohort 17 for the LEAD IFAS program

ASGSA Awards



John Bromfield | Mentor of the Year

Arslan Tariq | Ph.D. Student of the Year



Luana Alvares | Master's Student of the Year

ANS Sustaining Industry Partner Awards



The ANS Sustaining Industry Partner Award honors friends of our department who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and support. Through their sustained efforts, they have strengthened our relationships with students, farmers, ranchers, and the allied industry, fostering a multi-generational impact on our department and industries we serve. We would like to congratulate **Carol Postley** and **Don Bennink** on receiving the very first ANS Sustaining Industry Partner Award!

Awards in Innovation



The Animal Sciences graduate program received the Award for Innovation in Graduate Student Success from the UF Graduate School for its Gator Tank programming, which spurs graduate students to transform research into real-life solutions. Gator Tank has helped Grad Gators launch startups, secure patents, and win national competitions beyond traditional academic pathways.



Graduate Student Milestones



Gabriel A. Zayas

Successful Ph.D. Thesis Defense: *Novel Genomic Approaches to Explore Heterosis Genetic Diversity, Selection, and Introgression in Cattle*



Giovanni Ladeira

First author in accepted manuscript: *Detecting and characterizing copy number variation in a large commercial U.S. Holstein cattle population*



Leticia Casarotto Trevisan

Successful Ph.D. Thesis Defense: *Heat Stress in Late Gestation: A Placental Perspective on Dairy Cows Outcomes*



Luana Alvares

Successful Master's Thesis Defense: *Unraveling genetic and non-genetic factors influencing horn fly infestation in purebred and crossbred beef cattle populations*



SUPERIOR
Accomplishment Awards



Brittney Diehl
Rookie of the Year



Corwin Nelson
Faculty



Jessie Hooten
Sustained Excellence



Byron Davis & Tommy Estevez
Team Collaboration

Alumni Highlights



Jerri Dumke

International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE) Young Leaders Under 30 Award



Cecilia Constantino Rocha

2025 ASAS Young Scholar Award



ANS Judging and Show Team Awards

Livestock Judging Team

The Darby, Calhoun, GA

5th Place Team Overall

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Houston, TX

Did not place, but participated in major national contest

The Southeastern Livestock Expo, Montgomery, AL

3rd Place Team Overall

Division Team Placing

3rd in Swine
4th in Cattle
4th in Sheep and Goats
5th in Reasons

Individual Awards

Leydializ Aviles

3rd in Cattle
6th in Swine
7th in Reasons
5th High Point Overall

The All-East, West Lafayette, IN at Purdue University

6th High Team Overall

Division Team Placing

3rd in Swine
5th in Cattle

Individual Awards

India Wilson

8th in Cattle

Jasmyn Billano

4th in Cattle
3rd in Swine

Leydializ Aviles

1st in Swine
1st in Sheep and Goats
10th in Reasons

High Point Overall

Horse Judging Team

Spring Sweepstakes, Amarillo, TX

6th High Team Overall

Individual Awards

Addison Grosz (Limited Division)

7th High Halter
2nd High Performance
9th High Reasons
5th High Overall Individual

Arabella Hepler (Limited Division)

10th High Performance

Hannah Herbst (Limited Division)

3rd High Halter
6th High Performance
4th High Overall Individual

Eliana Garcia (Limited Division)

5th High Performance

Brahman Show Team

Participated at **Florida State Fair** and **Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo**

Meat Judging Team

Southeastern Meat Judging Contest

2nd Place Team Overall

Individual Awards

Rayna Heartquist

3rd High Individual
2nd Lamb Judging
3rd Specifications
5th Reasons

Joyce Worley

9th High Individual
6th Pork Judging

Lauren Higgins

10th High Individual
5th Beef Grading
3rd Total Beef

Natalie Moore

5th Lamb Judging
4th Reasons

Kayla Edwin

2nd Place Alternate

Asude Deryol

3rd Place Alternate

Jonathan Hymes

4th Place Alternate

Endowed Professorships



Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo

Thomas H. and Mary J. Braddock Professorship

Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo will receive the Thomas H. and Mary J. Braddock Professorship. Dr. DiLorenzo, a Professor in the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences at the North Florida Research and Education Center in Marianna, earned his PhD from the University of Minnesota and completed Postdoctoral studies at Texas Tech University. He joined UF in 2010 and quickly became recognized as a leading scientist in beef cattle sciences. Today, he leads one of the department's largest research programs, mentoring 32 graduate students over the past 15 years. His excellence in graduate training and publication in top journals earned him the 2024 UF Doctoral Dissertation Advisor/Mentoring award. Dr. DiLorenzo's substantial extramural funding, blending federal, state, and industry support, underscores his program's broad and impactful reach. His research on mitigating methane production in beef cattle has attracted international attention, highlighted by his team's invitation to host the 2023 Greenhouse Gas and Animal Agriculture conference. Recently, the USDA awarded his program a \$5M grant to advance methane reduction methods in cattle. Dr. DiLorenzo is also deeply committed to extending his research to the beef industry. Through his active Extension program, he and his students have become trusted advisors and educators across Florida, the US, and internationally. The Florida Bull Test, one of his key programs, has generated an estimated \$2.5M in economic impact for the Florida beef industry over the past decade. Congratulations to Dr. DiLorenzo and his team for this well-deserved recognition!



Dr. Todd Thrift

Jim Handley Beef Sciences Professorship

Dr. Todd Thrift will receive the Jim Handley Beef Sciences Professorship. Dr. Thrift, an Associate Professor in the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences in Gainesville, earned his PhD from Texas A&M University and served as an Extension Specialist in the Texas A&M system for four years. He joined UF in 2001 and has dedicated his career to teaching Beef Science and providing Extension services to beef producers. Dr. Thrift is responsible for nearly all of our beef sciences curriculum, and his courses are highly sought after by UF students. Many of his former students have gone on to successful careers in the beef industry, frequently citing Dr. Thrift's impact on their success. Among his many impactful Extension activities, Dr. Thrift leads the Beef Quality Assurance program, a partnership among UF, the Florida Cattlemen's Association and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This program has provided significant financial benefits to the beef industry. Dr. Thrift also coordinates our department's Brahman Project, a multidisciplinary initiative aimed at enhancing the role of the Brahman breed in commercial beef production in warm climates. Over the years, Dr. Thrift has become a national expert in this field, receiving numerous invitations to speak at industry events. In recognition of his work, Dr. Thrift recently received both the Beef Improvement Federation's Continuing Service Award and the Florida Cattlemen's Researcher of the Year Award. Congratulations to Dr. Thrift for this well-earned honor!



LIVESTOCK JUDGING



HORSE JUDGING



MEATS JUDGING



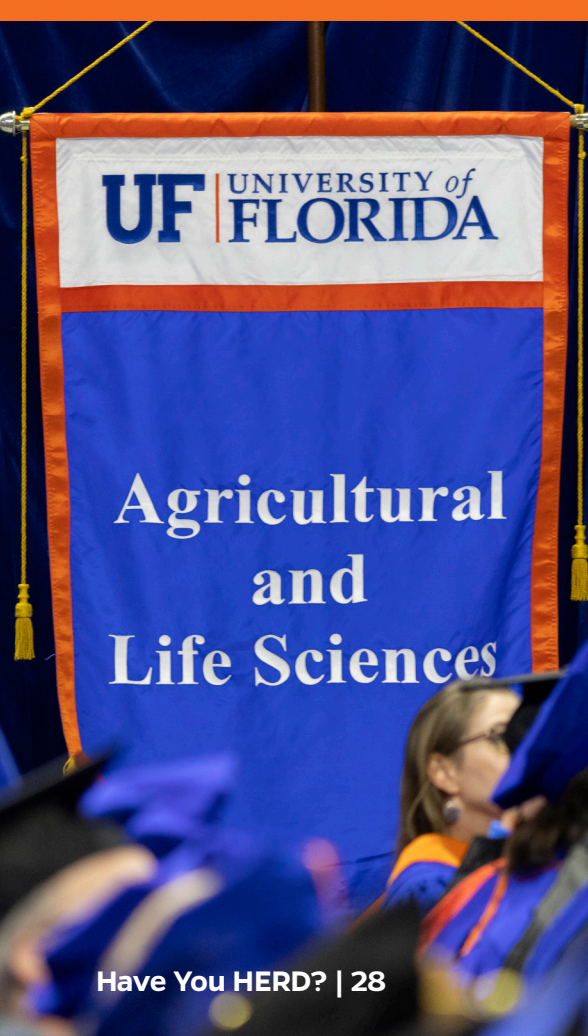
Congratulations!
**Animal Sciences Undergraduate
 & Master's Class of Spring 2025**





Congratulations!

Animal Sciences Ph.D. Class of Spring 2025





TIP OF THE HAT

CELEBRATING FACULTY ACHIEVEMENT AND COLLEGIALITY

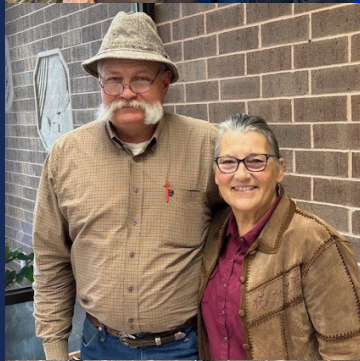
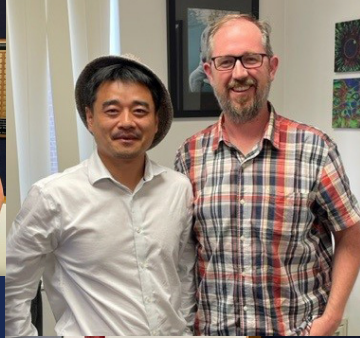
By Dr. John Arthington

In the Department of Animal Sciences, we take pride in fostering a culture of achievement, recognition, and mutual support among our faculty. To highlight these values, we introduced a new tradition that we call the Tip of the Hat.

This idea was originally introduced to me while a member of an organization at Purdue University during my undergraduate years. In that group, an old hat was passed among members at each meeting to recognize an individual's specific achievement or to acknowledge a personal gesture that positively impacted a colleague. The concept of the hat as a symbol of respect and recognition stayed with me, and in the Spring of 2022, I set out to find a similar hat to start this tradition in our department. After a bit of searching on eBay, we found our "Old Hat," and the tradition was born.

For the past three years, the Old Hat has been passed among faculty members in recognition of individual accomplishments and acts of collegiality. While faculty in top-ranked departments like ours are known for their competitive spirit, it's important to recognize the special bond that unites us. Though our professional agendas may sometimes diverge, there is a shared respect and connection among us. The Old Hat may not be the most glamorous, but its worn appearance is a testament to its meaning: a symbol of appreciation for the people who make our department not just a place of work, but a community.

Each time the Old Hat is passed, it reminds us that while we strive for excellence, we also honor the contributions and support of those around us. It's a simple, yet powerful way to celebrate both personal achievements and the spirit of collegiality that makes our department truly special.



40

Gators Under 40

By University of Florida Alumni Association



ELIZABETH MAXWELL
BS '08 | GAINESVILLE, FL
Assistant Professor of Surgical Oncology, University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine

Dr. Elizabeth A Maxwell is a Miami native who graduated from UF with a Bachelor of Science in 2008. Dr. Maxwell attended Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine in 2008, returning to UF to complete her clinical training in 2011, and graduating with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 2012. Wanting to specialize in surgery, Dr. Maxwell completed a 3-year surgery residency, and Master of Science degree program at the University of Illinois. Following completion of her residency, she returned to UF to complete a 1-year Surgical Oncology fellowship. During this time, Dr. Maxwell successfully passed the surgical board examination, becoming a board-certified veterinary surgeon and one of fewer than 60 veterinary surgical oncologists in the US. Since completing her training, Dr. Maxwell was hired as an Assistant Professor in Surgical Oncology at UF and has contributed significantly to clinical research, teaching, and service over the past 5 years.

Dr. Maxwell currently serves as Past-President for the non-profit organization Collaborative Care Coalition and is host of the Veterinary Society of Surgical Oncology podcast, "The Margin." Dr. Maxwell is passionate about research in pain management. She is a Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner, and a Certified Veterinary Acupuncturist. She is the founder and director of the Pain Innovations Research Laboratory, committed to exploring innovative approaches to pain assessment, diagnosis, and treatment in animals. This laboratory also serves as a hub for translational research, where bench-to-bedside solutions can be developed and tested to improve the lives of animals and humans.



JASON ANTON
BS '08 | GLENCOE, OK
Owner/Operator, OvaFlo Genetics

Dr. Jason Anton is a native of Lithia, Florida and completed a B.S. in Animal Science from the University of Florida (2008). He received his M.S. in Animal Science from Clemson University (2010) and his DVM from Oklahoma State University (2015). Upon graduating veterinary school, Dr. Anton joined a busy bovine embryo transfer practice in Georgia. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Anton had the opportunity to join a veterinarian-owned livestock genetics company in Victoria, Australia as Center Veterinarian. He spent two years abroad and was responsible for the successful implementation of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) in cattle, sheep, goats, and horses. Dr. Anton also provided veterinary oversight to the import and export of live animals and genetic material while with the company.

Dr. Anton is currently the owner/operator of OvaFlo Genetics, an embryo transfer practice established in the Fall of 2017. OvaFlo Genetics operates primarily on a mobile platform but also has a 'brick and mortar' component to include a surgery suite, in vitro fertilization lab (IVF), and client animal housing. The primary areas of practice focus include cattle and small ruminant artificial insemination, embryo recovery and transfer, IVF, and semen cryopreservation.

Dr. Anton currently pursues research opportunities with other colleagues in the field of ART each year, with a present focus on in vitro technologies in small ruminants. Furthermore, he is an adjunct instructor for Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine and thoroughly enjoys mentoring students.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 
- 07/16/25 - 07/19/25 • **Summer Youth Judging Camps**
 - 08/05/25 - 08/06/25 • **Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Training**
 - 10/10/25 - 10/11/25 • **Small Ruminant Short Course**
 - 10/10/25 - 10/11/25 • **Ram and Buck Test Sale**
 - 10/23/25 • **Dairy Production Conference**
 - 12/08/25 - 12/12/25 • **Livestock Education Certification for Agriculture Law Enforcement (LECALE)**
 - TBD • **Internship Seminar**
 - TBD • **Little International**
 - TBD • **UF Cow Sale**

GIVING

Your generous donation to the UF/IFAS Animal Sciences Department will provide support for our students, faculty and staff.

To support our department, our scholarships and more, scan the QR code or visit give.ifas.ufl.edu/animal-sciences-giving/.

