Have You HERD

UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences Newsletter
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FALL 2025

Have You HERD

UF/IFAS DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES

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Letter from the Chair

Jason “Jay” Ferrell
PROFESSOR & INTERIM CHAIR

Dear alumni, friends and supporters,

The last few months have been a blur of activity and progress. Since I stepped into this role back in August, I’ve consistently been amazed by the depth and complexity of the work happening across this department. From nutrition to physiology to reproduction, the breadth of ongoing research programs speaks to the innovation and dedication of our faculty and students. Dr. Peter Hansen’s receipt of the prestigious Simmet Prize, for example, recognizes his outstanding work in embryo transfer, which has transformed the field of animal reproduction.

Equally inspiring is the scope of our teaching mission. With an undergraduate enrollment of 568 students comes a responsibility to the hundreds of families who have entrusted us to help shape the futures of their loved ones. Moreover, our 85 graduate students have chosen our department for its outstanding faculty mentors, specialized course offerings, and plentiful resources, and many of these students will go on to make change in communities around the world. I have seen our faculty work tirelessly to support the individual goals of each student—no small task given the size of our student population.

The Animal Sciences department offers a host of unique programs that reflect this group’s commitment to that responsibility. Initiatives such as our ANS Ambassadors program, Have You HERD program, and Graduate Student Symposium offer exciting educational opportunities for our students. These require a huge devotion of time and effort, and I am proud of the incredible leadership and initiative our faculty and staff demonstrate every day to ensure our students receive the best possible education and support.

We have made considerable progress toward finding a new permanent department chair in the last few months, assembling a large committee that represents students, industry partners, and faculty from each of the specializations offered within our Animal Sciences program. This is a critical step for the department’s future, and many faculty members have generously devoted significant time and energy to this process. Your efforts do not go unnoticed, and I deeply appreciate the sacrifices you’ve made to move us forward.

On a personal note, I want to thank all of you—faculty and staff—for your patience and support as I navigate this steep learning curve. I still have much to learn, but every time I’ve needed assistance, you’ve stepped up without hesitation. That spirit of collaboration is what makes this department exceptional.

Finally, a special shout-out to our department staff. Our administrative team is among the best in IFAS and is navigating major changes with remarkable flexibility. Their hard work behind the scenes ensures that operations run smoothly and allows faculty to focus on our core missions of teaching, research, and Extension.

The department is seeing significant transformation in a short time, and these circumstances have demanded adaptability and compromise. Your contributions are invaluable, and I am grateful for all you do.

Thank you all for your dedication and teamwork. Together, we are building on a strong foundation and preparing for an even brighter future.

Sincerely,

Jason “Jay” Ferrell

Professor & Interim Chair

Small Ruminant Short Course RECAP

By Dr. Brittany Diehl

The fourth annual UF/IFAS Small Ruminant Short Course was hosted Friday, October 10, and Saturday, October 11, in Gainesville, where we continued to host hands-on pre-conference seminar sessions on Thursday, October 9. The pre-conference sessions were sold out again this year and focused on advanced training in forage/pasture management and small ruminant veterinary techniques. This event is a collaborative event between the Department of Animal Sciences and the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. The Department of Agronomy and numerous UF/IFAS County Extension Agent faculty are also partners in this program. This year's program focused on a plethora of important topics in the industry, including genetics and parasite resistance, grazing strategies, antibiotic usage, and a producer panel with agrivoltaics producers who utilize co-location of solar energy and agriculture (sheep production). The trade show, lamb cooking demonstration, and table topic rotations remain popular among attendees. The conference is chaired by Dr. Brittany Diehl, Clinical Assistant Professor & Small Ruminant Extension Specialist for the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. The entire committee is to be commended for their tremendous efforts and the encouraging responses from attendees.

The small ruminant short course also serves as the finale for the UF Ram & Buck Test programs. These 84-day performance tests are designed to evaluate the rams' and bucks' ability to perform in the harsh Florida climate and within a cohort for evaluation of natural parasite resistance and growth. The programs were launched in response to small ruminant producers in the southeast requesting a way to evaluate individuals who produce progeny with higher growth rates and innate parasite resistance. We appreciate the unique opportunity to host both programs simultaneously, yet separately. A unique characteristic of our programs is that we do not require the test consignments to be a specific breed; our tests are open to any breed. Those superior-performing individuals on-test are then eligible for auction at the conclusion of the test period.

The 2025 UF Ram Test Sale (online auction) was also held during the event. Our buck test completed its second year in 2025 with 70 bucks consigned to the test; 38 different producers were represented from 13 different states. We did not hold a buck sale this year, as the producers of bucks who were eligible for sale chose to retain their genetics. The department is excited about the continued growth and expansion of these programs. These events are also collaborative efforts between the Department of Animal Sciences and UF College of Veterinary Medicine. UF Small Ruminant Unit Manager Clay Whitehead and Dr. Brittany Diehl led the coordination of these events. Please be sure to check the department website for updated information as it relates to future events.

59th Annual Florida Dairy Production Conference Road Show

By Dr. Izabella Toledo

This year, the Florida Dairy Production Conference changed its format to a Road Show, becoming an interstate collaborative conference and bringing dairy education closer to Southeast dairy producers.

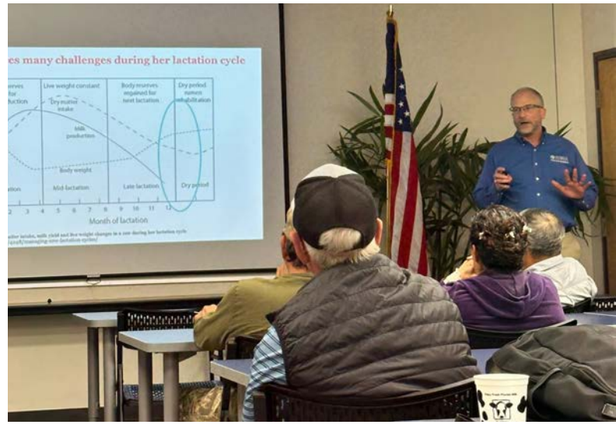
The traditional conference was held at the UF/IFAS Extension office in Okeechobee, FL, on November 12 and at the University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton, GA, on November 13.

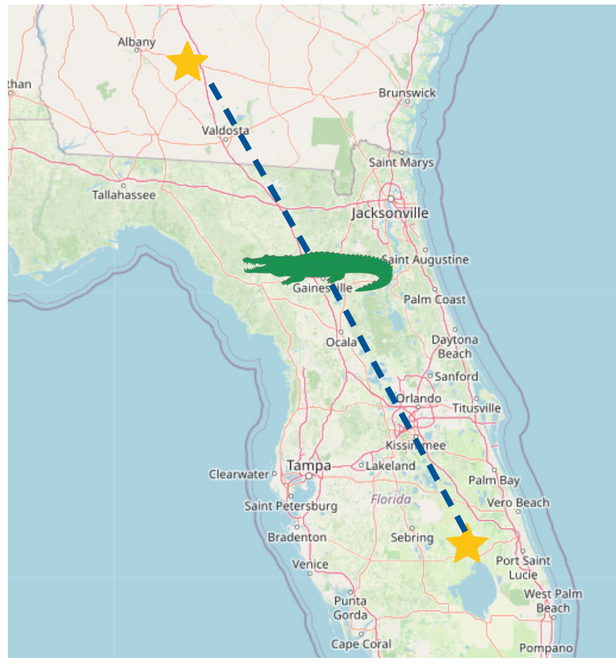
The conference brought together University of Florida researchers and dairy industry leaders to present and discuss current relevant topics to an audience of about 65 participants, including dairy producers, faculty, students, and dairy industry partners. Producers represented a large portion of the dairy industry of both Florida and Georgia, with their herds together accounting for over 40,000 cows!

Dr. Mike Hutjens, professor emeritus from the University of Illinois, started the day off with his presentation titled "Unlocking the secrets of optimal dairy production: A 7-pound milestone." Dr. Geoffrey Dahl from the University of Florida and Dr. Sha Tao from the University of Georgia presented in Okeechobee and Tifton, respectively, highlighting new data and recent insights focusing on management of cows during late lactation to the early dry period. Dr. Izabella Toledo, also from the University of Florida, brought a practical perspective on commercial application of "smart" technologies to reduce water usage when cooling cows. The conference concluded with a presentation from Dr. José Santos from the University of Florida on the effects of a maternal bovine appeasing substance on the health and production performance of dairy cows.

During lunch and throughout the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to interact and network with producers, faculty, students, and dairy industry representatives.

The organizers thank all the speakers and conference sponsors Perdue Animal Nutrition and FERA Diagnostics and Biologicals.





11TH ANIMAL SCIENCES GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

By Adriana Barbat & Dr. Antonio Faciola

For over a decade, the Animal Sciences department has hosted an annual symposium to share and celebrate the prolific research and collaboration of our graduate program.

The 11th Animal Sciences Graduate Student Symposium took place in the beautiful UF/IFAS Austin Cary Forest Campus in Gainesville on Wednesday, October 8. The symposium kicked off with an hour of poster presentations, during which 14 abstracts were displayed and presented, followed by four oral presentations.

Distinguished Lecturer Dr. Mary Beth Hall, a former faculty member of the department, spoke about her career in Extension, research, and innovation and offered key insights for the next generation of scientists. Then came another round of 12 poster presentations and four more oral presentations, and finally, Gator Tank.

The Gator Tank initiative started in 2023 and has become one of the major highlights of the symposium. Established by Graduate Program Coordinator Dr. Antonio Faciola, this competition gives students an opportunity to present ideas. Gator Tank winners have gone on to found businesses, such as lab equipment manufacturer Moochanics, obtain patents, and fund research ideas. Judges select winners based on criteria such as pitch novelty, scientific soundness, and clarity of communication.

Gator Tank has been opened to labs from other departments to broaden the impact of students across UF/IFAS, and the competition has even been adopted by other departments around the country. It culminates in the Sciencing Challenge, a Shark Tank-like finale at the American Dairy Science Association annual meeting.

This year's nine presentations ranged in topic from meat vacuum packaging to smart cooling on dairy farms to avoid heat stress. The three winning teams received cash prizes from sponsors Evonik and RP Nutrients.

First place was awarded to Jessica Xhumari and Amanda Ojeda from the Roesch Lab in the department of Microbiology & Cell Science for their pitch of Slips, a synthetic mucous solution. Tyeler Gilliam, Animal Sciences Ph.D. student in the Brooks Lab, came in second place with an innovative harness design for equine research, while Abdul Waheed, Ph.D. student in the Animal Molecular & Cellular Biology Program in the Binelli Lab, took home the third-place prize for his intrauterine microbial supplement pitch.

The symposium closed with an awards presentation and a reception with live music and dinner.

Thank you to our sponsors, Balchem, Evonik, RP Nutrients, and Zinpro, for helping us put on another successful symposium!

Congratulations to our award winners!

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

1. Sebastian Salvatierra
2. Vinicius Izquierdo
3. Julia Rasia

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1. Giovanni Ladeira
2. Onan Martinez
3. Hirys Olmo

GATOR TANK

1. Amanda Ojeda & Jessica Xhumari
2. Tyeler Gilliam
3. Abdul Waheed

Weanling Extravaganza

By Adriana Barbat

Family, friends, and community members gathered on Dec. 6 at the UF Horse Teaching Unit arena for the third annual Weanling Extravaganza, the capstone event of the UF Animal Sciences Weanling Behavior Modification class. Students guided their horses through a mixed obstacle course and horse show pattern that included water obstacles, bridges, and a ladder.

This year's class worked with 17 weanlings bred from the UF herd, building communication and problem-solving skills as they learned safe horse handling and training techniques. Each student implemented training methods and ground handling skills to produce a calm, well-mannered horse that responds to verbal cues, body position, restraint, and correction techniques. Presentations were evaluated by a panel of judges, and trophies went home with the top three placings.

This year also marked 30 years of UF's horse program, and a 30 year celebration preceding the main event offered talks covering equine genetics, nutrition, reproduction, and behavior.

We would like to thank Justin Callaham and Angela Chandler, who taught the Weanling Behavior Modification class and organized the Weanling Extravaganza, as well as Dr. Saundra TenBroeck, Dr. Brad Daigneault, Joel McQuagge, Lori Warren, Dr. Samantha Brooks, and Dr. Carissa Wickens, who gave talks at the 30 year celebration event. Congratulations to this class on an incredible show!

Fall 2025 Weanling Extravaganza Placings:

1st: Megan Watier, with UF When In Doubt (Armani)

2nd: Victoria Vivaldi, with UF All That Glitters (Tiffany)

3rd: Zoie Kline, with UF Six Pack (Hugo)

4th: Danitsa Gonzalez, with UF Simple Man (Tom Ford)

5th: Michaela Damon, with UF Jess In Time (Vera)

6th: Casey Wright, with UF Kruzen By (Coco)

7th: Amanda Hammel, with UF Sleepin Alone (Marc Jacobs)

8th: Ryleigh Gray, with UF Mega Gun (Tag)

9th: Abby Nunamaker, with UF Im Flattered Too (Aston)

10th: Savannah Morgan, with UF Drippin Gold (Dolce)

11th: Colby Kerle, with UF Gopher Broke (Woodford)

12th: Bridget Kozelka, with UF A Mightty Legacy (Bentley)

13th: Melissa Hernandez, with UF Secret Stash (Salvatore)

14th: Samantha Silva, with UF Cold Brew (Louis)

15th: Trinity Gram, with UF Bet Hesa Hadi (Valentino)

16th: Taylor Friend, with UF Cattastic (Callaway)

17th: Austen Breland, with UF This Gal Shines (Berkley)

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT!

By Meg Alexander

Dr. Raluca Mateescu

Professor of Quantitative Genetics and Genomics

Dr. Raluca Mateescu has served as an Associate Professor of Quantitative Genetics and Genomics at the UF Department of Animal Sciences since 2014.

Her research has focused on beef cattle, sheep and goat production and health, specifically targeting meat development, environmental stress, and advancements in breeding.

She completed her master's and doctorate degree at Cornell University, where she then worked as a postdoctoral research associate developing her background in molecular biology, animal breeding, and genetics.

Dr. Mateescu went on to become an influential instructor at Oklahoma State University and finally the University of Florida. Dr. Mateescu has been instrumental in preparing undergraduate and graduate students to understand and improve their consumption and development of biotechnology.

Gabriel Zayas, a former Ph.D. student under Dr. Mateescu, has directly felt her impact and developed a passion for learning in this field through her mentorship. He said her guidance balanced independent exploration and professional expectations, allowing students to ask questions and learn while also providing support. Zayas said Dr. Mateescu leads by example, holding herself to high standards and encouraging others to strive to be their best selves: "With her support and encouragement, I've felt more confident in taking initiative, contributing to collaborative projects, and trusting my own abilities as a researcher."

We would like to congratulate Dr. Mateescu on her hard work and dedication, and we are grateful for her contributions to the department and to the field of animal sciences.

Dr. Saundra TenBroeck

Associate Professor & State Extension Horse Specialist

Dr. Saundra TenBroeck has served the UF Department of Animal Sciences as a faculty member since 1985. Since obtaining her Ph.D. at Texas A&M University, Dr. TenBroeck has poured her heart into education, research, and Extension within the industry for the last 40 years. When she began her journey with the department, her duties were more heavily focused on Extension and teaching, but over the course of her career, she has been able to teach, coordinate Extension, and perform impactful research on equine reproduction, health, and livestock entomology. Her influence in the department and its equine program has helped to provide students with unique learning experiences that allow them to flourish as equestrians and industry supporters.

As the State Extension Horse Specialist for the department, Dr. Tenbroeck has also organized and directed youth and adult equine programs and assists with multi-state 4-H events geared toward youth and community education. Through her courses, she has been able to discuss a wide array of topics ranging from horse management and training to enterprise management. Her journey has been highly decorated with many honors, including Advisor of the Year as the UF Block & Bridle Advisor, CALS Undergraduate Advisor of the Year, and Superior Accomplishment recognition for her efforts as a dedicated faculty member. She has touched many lives not only through teaching several courses that have played integral roles in the success of the department's equine program, but also through her work in graduate committees, judging programs, and student organizations.

Congratulations, Dr. TenBroeck, on an exemplary career. We are so thankful for her leadership and contributions to the department and equine science.

COURSE SPOTLIGHT:

ANS 4635C
Meat Processing

By Savannah Linzmaier

Students enrolled in the UF/IFAS Animal Sciences (ANS) 4635C Meat Processing class gain a comprehensive, hands-on introduction to meat and poultry manufacturing, food safety, and product development. The course, offered each fall through UF/IFAS Animal Sciences, includes one weekly lecture and a laboratory emphasizing processing technology, inspection regulations, labeling, quality control, culinary applications, and marketing concepts.

ANS Lecturer Kyle Mendes inherited the class from former ANS Associate Professor Dr. Sally Williams and has been the instructor for four years now. “I took the class and did a little more of a research and development spin on it,” Mendes said.

While students continue to learn core processing practices—such as producing bacon, ham, sausage, and hot dogs—they also get to think critically and creatively to produce a product of their own as their final project. “They will write a HACCP plan, develop a marketing plan, and do all those things that go with their project,” Mendes said.

Students get hands-on processing experience through UF’s meat processing facility, where they work with the grinders, stuffers, and equipment used in commercial meat processing plants. “They get to work on the real equipment and get their hands dirty,” Mendes said.

While Mendes focuses on processing practices, a key skill that he hopes students leave with is critical thinking. Mendes incorporates scenario-based evaluations that simulate industry communication. “My midterm is a case study-type midterm where they actually respond to an email of a person who’s asking for advice,” he said. “There’s not a right answer. It’s how you present the advice… and show some understanding of each individual person’s operation.”

The course attracts a diverse range of students, including those interested in traditional meat processing, alternative proteins, and even pet food. Several former students have continued into careers with major companies across the meat industry, including Tyson Foods, JBS Foods, and Hatfield.

Vicky Mann, ANS Food Animal student, picked up the class as one of her electives. She has primarily focused on meat science throughout her degree and was interested in the practical application of this class. “It’s a more hands-on class than most because you’re actually processing different things,” Mann said. “We made hams, hot dogs, pastrami—all sorts of things you don’t really get in the other classes.”

Mann completed a summer internship with Cargill in Schuyler, NE, where she conducted micro-mapping research to reduce E. coli risk on freshly processed meat. She found that her food safety and processing experience gained from her internship translated directly into the class. “We have to manage all of the kill steps to make sure that whatever we’re producing doesn’t have any pathogens on it,” she said.

Mann’s semester project centers on creating a beef-based mousse topper for dogs and cats. She was inspired by her internship to learn more about this side of the industry. “Kyle said final project on whatever you want, so I was able to actually start figuring out if this is something I want to do,” she said.

She drew on her knowledge of binding agents, starches, and animal nutrition to develop the mousse. “I was able to apply everything I know… to find something appropriate for their diet but also a decent product,” she said, adding that her own animals approve of the product.

As the semester concludes, Mendes emphasizes that the course’s goals are to combine technical knowledge with real-world application. “Students learn the hard skills of making different products and a lot about food safety and HACCP,” he said. “Those experiences, and the ability to think critically through the process, are what prepare them for the industry.”

Mendes left the final comments, “Our meat science program, I think, is top notch. Dr. Carr, the Schefflers, Byron and Tommy there in the meat lab, and Angel, they all do a phenomenal job,” he said, adding: “That’s one of the things that makes our meat science program strong, and makes our students really strong—the fact that there is so much knowledge there and people willing to help and every person wanting our students to be successful.”

Animal Sciences 2025 Livestock Judging Team

By Savannah Linzmaier

The UF/IFAS Animal Sciences (ANS) 2025 Livestock Judging Team wrapped up a full season of competitions spanning eight states from February through November. The seven-member team—Leydializ Aviles, Allison Bennett, Jasmyn Billano, Syler Griffin, McKenzie Locke, Hunter Taylor, and India Wilson—competed under the leadership of coach Allyson Trimble Erickson, ANS Academic Program Specialist.

Students began informally practicing in fall 2024, before officially starting on the team in January 2025. Most members were new to judging, with some bringing experience from competing in high school. “We start from ground zero,” Erickson said. “We do in a year what most other teams do in at least four years, if not more.”

The group competed in eight intercollegiate contests throughout the year. In spring semester, they competed in The Darby in Calhoun, GA, the Southeastern Livestock Exposition in Montgomery, AL, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston, TX, and the All-East in West Lafayette, IN. In fall semester, they competed in the Prof. Lidvall Memorial Livestock Judging Contest in Cookeville, TN, the Keystone International Livestock Exposition in Harrisburg, PA, the Southeastern Regional Livestock Judging Contest in Wilmington, NC, and their

year wrapped up at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, KY.

Students on the Livestock Judging Team use performance records and visual assessment to evaluate breeding and market animals, beef cattle, hogs, and sheep. Students rank the animals on their value and defend their decisions using oral or written reasons. This practice builds communication, critical thinking, and confidence.

For many students on the team, the personal growth outweighed their rankings. “I’ve gotten so close with my teammates, and those are people I’m going to have for a lifetime,” said team member Hunter Taylor. “We improved so much in so many ways… I’m just proud of how we did as a team and what we’ve taken away from it.”

One of Erickson’s favorite memories of the season captured Taylor’s takeaway perfectly. At the Southeastern Regional contest in North Carolina, Taylor heard his name called for the first time. “The team was more excited that he had his name called than any of them getting their name called,” she said.

For team member McKenzie Locke, moments like that built her confidence as well. “The last two contests before Louisville, I got my name called twice,” she said. “I was like, oh, I’m doing it! I was proud of myself.”

Teammate Leydializ Aviles highlighted the relationships that formed over the season. “My teammates will be friends forever,” she said. “We’ve had so many experiences and memories this year… that’s my favorite part.”

The team’s contest schedule required discipline and time management to balance team activities, their academics, and their personal lives. “They’re just a great group,” Erickson said. “Regardless of the outcome of any contest, they have skill, they have work ethic, they’re just good people.”

Taylor, Locke, and Aviles first connected with the Animal Sciences department through Have You HERD, a one-day, individualized program for prospective ANS students.

For many, the experience offered clarity and early connections. “Have You HERD was the best experience because it solidified what I wanted to do,” Aviles said. “Coming here and being on the judging team, I already had that connection with Allyson.”

Locke described the program as eye-opening. “Talking to professors and students currently taking courses I was interested in… it helped me see what UF had to offer,” she said.

Taylor added that the packed program helps students understand the resources available: “There’s so much info in one day, but the faculty are there to help you and get you plugged in.”

Erickson noted that the program also helps her identify future judging team prospects early. “It puts them on my radar before they even get here,” she said.

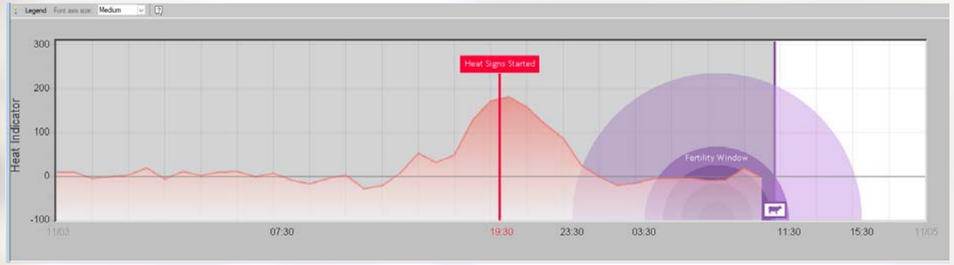
With the 2025 season behind them, the students are turning toward what’s next. Taylor and Aviles plan to join the Meat Judging Team in the future, while Locke is preparing for graduation and veterinary school.

Erickson is already preparing for future seasons. She has some current students who will begin practicing in 2026 and some prospective students she hopes to recruit next year. “By the time 2027 rolls around, we’ll have the potential to have a really good team,” she said.

ORANGE AND MOO?

New Activity Tracking Collars Advance Dairy Herd Management

By Matti Moyer

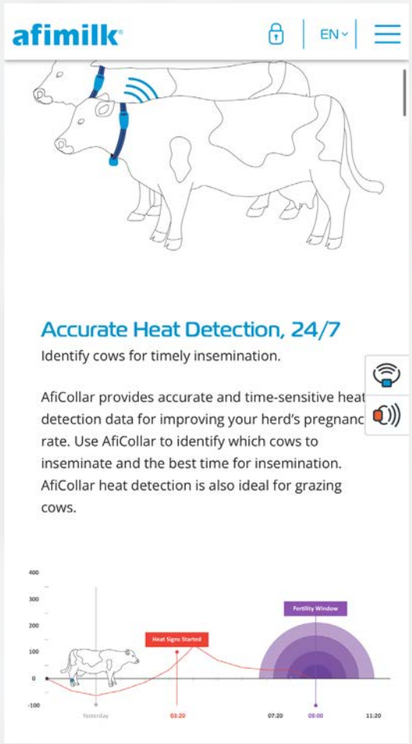


The University of Florida's Dairy Research Unit has started a new partnership with Afimilk, a global leader in dairy monitoring technologies. Our almost 500 head dairy herd is now wearing brand new activity-tracking collars. These lightweight devices are comparable to a step tracker Fitbit for humans! Coincidentally, these collars happen to be our favorite colors: orange and blue.

The new collars sync with AfiFarm, a herd management software that allows us to monitor both group metrics, such as heat stress and digestive disorders, and activity at the individual level, such as rumination and eating.

This data can offer important insight into the herd's health. For example, if the collar detects that an animal has had a decrease in steps, that might indicate that there could be possibility of illness, while if it shows an increase in steps that might indicate that the animal is in estrus. Dairy Research Manager Roney Zimpel says having this type of technology "will help us with breeding cows that are in heat efficiently and early identification of diseases". Zimpel is able to track this information through a computer program as well as an app on his phone. The ability to access the system both online and through a mobile app means he can check on the herd anytime from his office, from home, or even while working in the barns. That 24/7 visibility ensures that no shift in animal behavior goes unnoticed.

Our department prioritizes animal welfare, cutting-edge research, and hands-on student education, and we are excited about how this new program will help us advance our herd management. Students now have the opportunity to learn from real-world data generated by the animals they care for, gaining valuable experience with technology that is increasingly common across the dairy industry. Beyond day-to-day herd management, the Afimilk system is opening new doors for teaching, research, and Extension at the University of Florida. To learn more about these collars and their vast capabilities, visit https://www.afimilk.com/.



IN FIVE YEARS

By Meg Alexander

Nirali Pathak

Specialization: Biology

"UF offers countless opportunities, and the Gator Nation truly has a wide reach—there are always connections and people willing to support you in achieving your goals. The hardest part is often just reaching out! Don't be afraid to try new things, even if they seem outside your comfort zone—you never know where those experiences may lead."

Nirali is currently a small animal rotating intern at the Texas A&M Small Animal Teaching Hospital. Having graduated from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine in 2025, she is now participating in the Veterinary Internship & Residency Matching Program, which will help her advance to the next phase of training as a veterinarian.

During her undergraduate studies, Nirali served as an Animal Sciences ambassador and was president of the Minority Pre-Veterinary Students club. She also served as the lead undergraduate teaching assistant for the Introduction to Animal Sciences Lab. She feels these experiences not only provided her with communication and leadership skills, but fostered a passion for academia in veterinary medicine. She said the original investment in her success from faculty and their continued support encouraged her throughout her research process.

In the last five years, Nirali attended and graduated from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine, continuing her involvement in leadership roles and research. She was also inducted into the University of Florida Hall of Fame recognizing her graduate and veterinary research. In the next five years, she hopes to become a small animal veterinary surgeon within an academic teaching hospital and continue contributing to academia.

Dana Patterson Yoder

Specialization: Food Animal

"Chase your dreams, not the opinions or approval of others. Pursue what interests you and know that it is never too late to change course."

Dana is the manager of food safety and quality assurance at Miller Poultry in Orland, IN. After completing her undergraduate srudies, she began as a Broiler Technician with Miller Poultry and has since served in three distinct roles. She completed two internships with the company during her undergrad, which guided her toward her career and gave her a deeper understanding of her current responsibilities and the company as a whole.

Throughout the last five years, in addition to getting married and having two daughters, Dana feels as though her experience and supportive leadership have helped her to grow both personally and professionally. In the next five years, she hopes to continue growing and developing her company's team and contributing to the ever-important task of ensuring food safety.

During her time at UF, Dana worked as a student employee at the Santa Fe Beef Unit for a little over two years and served as a member of UF Block and Bridle and Gator Collegiate Cattlewomen. She believes her experiences within the department supported her through mentorship, her involvement in student organizations, her student job, and classroom instruction.

Dana says that the most beneficial part of her undergraduate experience was participating in various activities that have taught her to be a well-rounded individual. Through networking, clubs and activities, internships, and jobs, she received a foundation for her career that expanded her horizons through internships.

Kelly Simcox

Specialization: Food Animal

"Going into the unknown can be daunting, especially when you are trying to figure out what to do with your life and your degree. All I can say is take the job. Make the move. Get uncomfortable. That is when your true skills, talent and knowledge can shine and grow."

Kelly is currently a human resources administrative specialist with Wayne Sanderson Farms in Dobson, NC. After graduating from the department with a minor in Management and Sales in Agribusiness, she moved to North Carolina and transitioned from Beginning Trainee to Field Employee Relations Trainee within a year and is now thriving in the Human Resources department.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic postponed her internship with Tyson Foods as an undergraduate student, she was able to intern with the UF Meat Lab on campus. Kelly believes this opportunity provided her with a deeper and more holistic understanding of meat processing and helped to guide her decision to focus on food quality control and safety. In the beginning of her career, she didn't imagine she'd be in her current position, but she feels as though stepping out of her comfort zone and starting her work with Wayne Sanderson Farms has allowed her to prosper in an environment where she feels respected, challenged, and proud to grow in her career.

During her undergrad, Kelly was a member of UF Block & Bridle and Gator Collegiate Cattlewomen. She says her experience in the department was amazing, as she enjoyed her professors, curriculum, labs, and developing friendships. In the next five years, she hopes to continue her growth professionally with Wayne Sanderson Farms as she takes on new responsibilities, leadership opportunities, and training to contribute at a higher level.

Michael Fioretto

Specialization: Biology

"Don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone, you might find something new you enjoy."

Michael is a general production manager for Tyson Foods in Harmony, NC. After graduating from the department in 2020, Michael obtained his master's degree from the department under the mentorship of Dr. Chad Carr. As an undergrad, he completed an internship with Pilgrims Pride in Alabama which provided him with a deeper understanding of the poultry production industry that he still applies today.

During his time at UF, Michael was a member of the Diary Science Club, the UF Meats Judging Team, and the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. He says his time in the department provided him with a great amount of guidance and support from faculty and his fellow students. He feels that his experiences on the Meats Judging Team and involvement in the meat science quiz bowl guided him to pursue his master's and current career path. Michael also says that this experience was one of the most beneficial components of his undergraduate career as it not only provided professional guidance, but also allowed him to travel and build lifelong relationships.

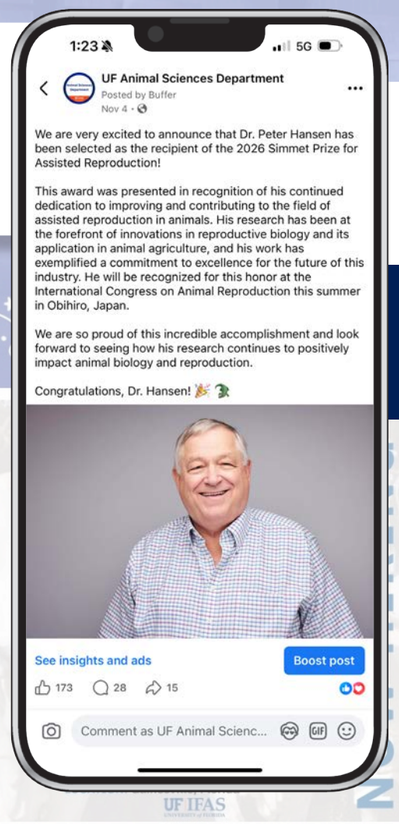
Over the last five years, Michael has enjoyed learning more about the poultry industry and developing necessary management skills in his position. In the next five years, he hopes to continue his work in rendering and become a plant manager in the southeast.

HIGHLIGHTS IN COMMUNICATIONS

FALL 2025 ANALYTICS

@uf_ansci
189,409 Views
107 New Followers
2,906 Total Followers

Top Instagram Post
Collaboration with UF/IFAS
721 Interactions
7,755 Views



UF Animal Sciences Department
193,722 Views
2,236 Interactions
251 New Followers
10,216 Total Followers

Top Facebook Post
12,111 Views
650 Engagement
15 Net Follows

Top X Post
668 Impressions

@uf_ansci
1,369 Followers

2025–2026
ANS Ambassadors

ANS Ambassadors help recruit prospective students, represent the department at events, and promote goodwill within and for the department, university, and animal agriculture industry.


Chloe Cole


Nadine Ferreira


Maya Haupt


Nathan Hughes


Emma Joyal


Jenna Larson


Rebecca Lyons


David Maldonado


Vicky Mann


Hunter Taylor


Charleigh Wood

Awards & Accomplishments

Dr. Peter J. Hansen received the **2026 Simmet Prize for Assisted Reproduction**, the most prestigious award in the field of animal reproduction. This prestigious award, presented once every 4 years, is the largest in animal reproduction and includes a prize of $50,000. The award is based on originality, significance, and impact of research.

Dr. Hao Ming, a postdoctoral associate in Dr. Carl Jiang laboratory has accepted a tenure-tract Assistant Professor position at LSU starting from January 1, 2026.

Jerri Dumke, ANS alumna, was named in the Business Observer's 2025 40 Under 40.

Sohail Siddique's abstract titled "Recreational Levels of THC Exposure from Cannabis Elicits Structural, Genomic and Novel Epigenomic Changes to Mature Sperm that Impact Embryo Development" has been selected for the Trainee Travel Award at SSR's 58th Annual Meeting, July 29-August 1, in Washington, DC.

Successful Fall 2025 Thesis Defenses

Madilyn Martin, M.S. | Characterization of Maternal and Fetal Vitamin D Metabolism During Pregnancy in Holstein Cows

Samia Farooq, Ph.D. | Evaluating Forage Preservation Strategies: Effects of Microbial Inoculation, Maturity, and Forage Type on Silage Fermentation, Nutrient Dynamics, and Microbial Ecology in Southeastern US

Emily Lindner, Ph.D. | Effects of Early Social Contact on Dairy Heifer Long-Term Development, Behavior, and Performance

Adeel Manzoor, Ph.D. | Inactivation Kinetics of Salmonella enterica, Shiga Toxin-Producing Escherichia coli and Listeria monocytogenes During Sous Vide Cookery of Beef Steaks

Daniel Onan Martinez Cabrera, Ph.D. | Heat Stress Impacts Methane Emissions Throughout the Life Cycle of Dairy Cows

Arslan Tariq, Ph.D. | Heat Stress: An Environmental Challenge to Immune Resilience and Health in Dairy Cows

BIGGEST Industry Supporter AWARD

By Matti Moyer

The Department of Animal Sciences wanted to begin recognizing and celebrating the exceptional individuals and organizations that have provided steadfast support to our programs over the years. To formally honor their lasting impact, we established the "ANS Biggest Industry Supporter Award", highlighting those whose dedication and partnership have been instrumental in our success.

We are thrilled to announce the very first ANS Biggest Industry Supporter Award recipients: Mr. Don Bennick and Ms. Carol Postley.

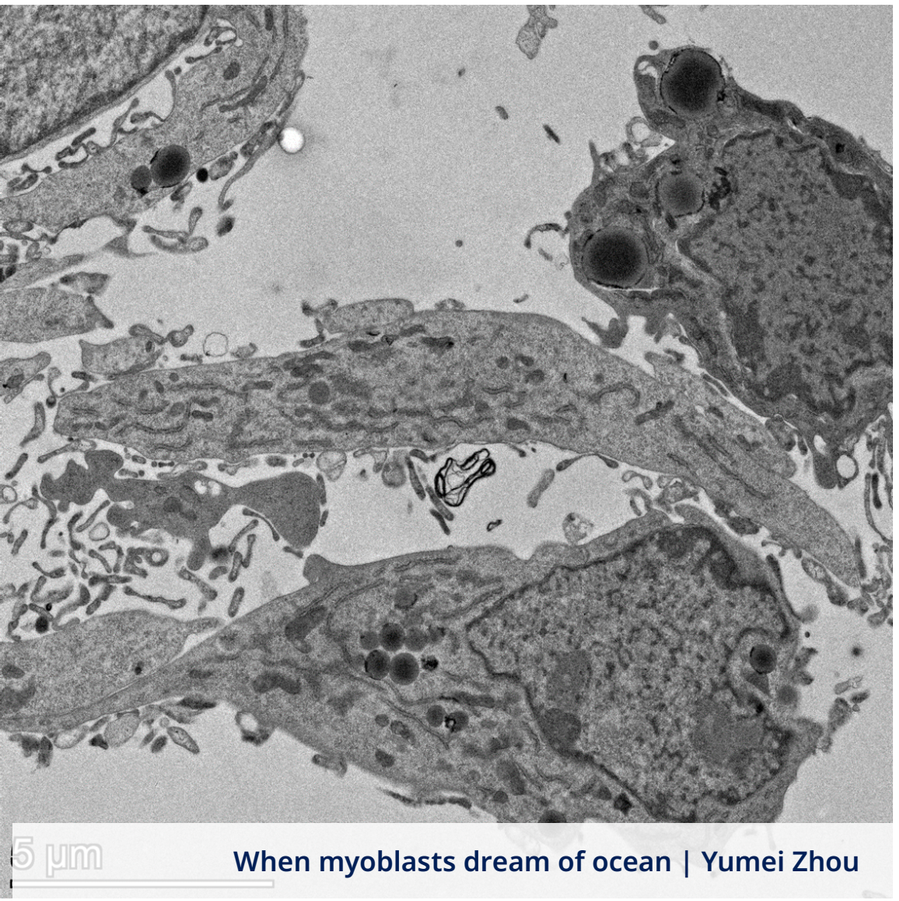
Mr. Bennick has been an unwavering advocate for our Dairy Science Program, consistently offering his time, expertise, and resources to help advance our students' learning experiences. His commitment to excellence and innovation in the dairy industry has set a powerful example for our students and faculty alike. We had the honor of presenting Mr. Bennick with his award during our ANS Celebration Day, surrounded by faculty, staff, and students who have all benefited from his generosity and mentorship.

Ms. Postley has made remarkable contributions to the growth and success of our Small Ruminant Program, supporting initiatives that have enhanced Research, Teaching and Extension. Her passion for the field and dedication to student development have left a lasting mark on our department. Ms. Postley received her award at the 4th Annual Small Ruminant Short Course, joined by small ruminant producers, faculty, and students who share her commitment to advancing the industry.

Both of these outstanding individuals have played a vital role in shaping the opportunities we can offer to our students and the growth of our programs. Without devoted supporters like Mr. Bennick and Ms. Postley, our department would not be able to deliver the exceptional, hands-on learning experiences that prepare our students to become industry leaders. We extend our deepest gratitude and heartfelt congratulations to our very first ANS Biggest Industry Supporter Award Winners. Thank you for your support and belief in our mission!

AMCB Photo Contest

By Dr. John Bromfield



5 µm

When myoblasts dream of ocean | Yumei Zhou

Each year we search for exciting photos that represent the University of Florida's Animal Molecular & Cellular Biology Program and Department of Animal Sciences for our annual photo contest.

Congratulations to Yumei Zhou on her winning entry, "When myoblasts dream of ocean."

Thank you to all the 2025 entrants: Noelia Alfaro-Diaz, Maria Bari, Fernanda Bernarde, Camila Cuellar, Brody Dean, Giovanna Evangelista, Angela Gonella Diaza, Jose Infante, Nicholas Kertz, Gabriela Macay, Sophia Obeso, Hirys Olmo, Savitha Saikumar, Sebastian Salvatierra, Zaeem Sarwar, Martha Ulina Siregar, Abby Sproull, Patricia Tayama, Abdul Waheed, and Yumei Zhou.

Scan the QR code to view all submissions!

RUNNER-UP:

UF Dairy Farm early morning (July 26, 5 am)

Giovanna Evangelista

2026 AMCB calendars featuring top contest photo entries are now available for purchase!

Calendars are $10 each. All funds go toward the Animal Sciences Graduate Student Association. Please reach out to Nick Kertz (n.kertz@ufl.edu) or Veronica Rubio (rubiosanveronica@ufl.edu) to purchase!

CONGRATS, GRADS!

We are thrilled to celebrate the graduation of seven outstanding graduate students:

Samia Farooq — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences

Emily E. Lindner — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences

Maria Camila Lopez Duarte — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences

Adeel Manzoor — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences

Madilyn Martin — Master of Science, Animal Sciences

Daniel Onan Martinez Cabrera — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences

Arslan Tariq — Doctor of Philosophy, Animal Molecular and Cellular Biology

Congratulations on this incredible achievement, and thank you for your dedication and meaningful contributions to the Department of Animal Sciences. We are excited to see where your next chapter takes you!

2025 IN REVIEW

UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences
352-392-1981

2250 Shealy Dr.
PO Box 110910
Gainesville, FL 32611

UPCOMING EVENTS

02/21/26	**Gator Collegiate CattleWomen Beef Dinner**
02/23/26 - 02/25/26	**Florida Ruminant Nutrition Symposium**
03/07/26	**Family Day at the Dairy Farm**
03/29/26	**Ropin' in the Swamp**
04/18/26	**Sale in the Swamp Preview**
04/18/26 - 04/25/26	**Sale in the Swamp Auction**
04/24/26	**ANS Celebration Day**
04/29/26 - 05/01/26	**Beef Cattle Short Course**

YOUTH EXTENSION EVENTS

01/23/26 - 01/24/26	**Livestock and Meats Judging Clinic**
02/06/25	**Florida State Fair 4H& FFA Prelim. Livestock Judging (Tampa)**
02/07/25	**Florida State Fair 4H and FFA Meat Judging (Tampa)**
04/11/25	**4H/FFA State Livestock Judging Contest**
04/18/25	**4H/FFA State Meat Judging Contest**

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/.

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