

# 2026 Florida Ruminant Nutrition Symposium

## Speaker Biographies



Heather White

**Heather White** is a Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a focus on dairy cattle nutritional physiology. Dr. White serves as the Faculty Director of the Dairy Innovation Hub that spans University of Wisconsin-Madison, Platteville, and River Falls and focuses on dairy related research that can improve animal health and welfare, enhance human nutrition, steward land and water resources, and grow farm businesses and communities.

[Heather M. White – Animal & Dairy Sciences](#)



Bradley J. Johnson

**Dr. Bradley J. Johnson** is currently the Gordon W. Davis Regent's Chair in meat science and muscle biology and a Professor in the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' Department of Animal and Food Sciences at Texas Tech University. Dr. Johnson received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in animal science from the University of Minnesota. His research focuses on factors regulating growth and development of skeletal muscle in meat animals such as beef cattle. His work includes exogenous growth promotants such as steroidal implants and beta-adrenergic agonists as models to study the mechanism of postnatal muscle growth in meat animals. Separately, the research team is involved in developing novel means to enhance marbling in beef. This research focuses on novel receptors present on intramuscular adipocytes that appear to have positive effects on lipid accumulation.

[Brad Johnson, Ph.D. | Meat Science & Muscle Biology | TTU](#)



Stephanie Hansen

**Stephanie Hansen** is a Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at Iowa State University. Dr. Hansen received her M.S. (2005) and Ph.D. (2008) degrees from North Carolina State University. Dr. Hansen's research focuses on mineral and vitamin nutrition and other aspects related to beef cattle nutrition and management.

[Stephanie Hansen](#)



William P. Weiss

**William P. Weiss** is an Emeritus Professor of Dairy Cattle Nutrition in the Department of Animal Sciences at The Ohio State University. He earned his B.Sc. and M.S. in animal sciences and animal nutrition from Purdue University (1980 and 1981) and the Ph.D. in dairy cattle nutrition from the Ohio State University (1985). Over a distinguished 35-plus-year career, Dr. Weiss conducted influential research on dairy cattle energetics, mineral and vitamin nutrition, forage conservation, ration formulation, and the role of antioxidants in immunity and mastitis resistance. He served on the 2001 NRC committee and the 2021 NASEM committee on dairy cattle nutrition.

[William P. Weiss](#)



Maria G. Spindola

**Maria G. Spindola** is the Global Minerals Director at Balchem (Animal Nutrition & Health), driving portfolio strategy and growth across international markets. Dr. Spindola received her DVM degree from the University of São Paulo, Brazil, and the Ph.D. in veterinary preventive medicine with a focus on epidemiology and public health also at the University of São Paulo. Dr. Spindola has over 14 years leading commercial teams and go-to-market execution across global markets.

[Maria Spindola - Balchem Corporation | LinkedIn](#)



Jonas de Souza

**Jonas de Souza** is the director of research and development and technical services for Perdue Animal Nutrition. Born and raised in Brazil, Dr. de Souza completed his M.S. in animal sciences at the University of São Paulo and the Ph.D. degree in dairy cattle nutrition at Michigan State University. His research focuses on the impact of different combinations of fatty acids on dairy cow performance and metabolism. Currently, he provides research and technical support to nutritionists and dairy producers in the areas of fatty acid and amino acid nutrition.

<https://www.perdueanimalnutrition.com/about-us/>



Kelly Nichols

**Kelly Nichols** is an Assistant Professor at the University of California, Davis. She earned her B.Sc. (2013) and M.Sc. (2015) from the University of Guelph, Canada, and the Ph.D. from Wageningen University, the Netherlands, in 2019. Her research focuses on dairy cattle nutrition, with emphasis on dietary protein and energy interactions, digestion, and metabolism. The Nichols Lab investigates mammary gland metabolism, postabsorptive nutrient utilization, and metabolite flux at the tissue level to improve the efficiency of converting dietary nutrients into high-quality milk, while addressing sustainability and resource use in dairy production.

[Kelly Nichols](#)



Fábio Lima

**Fábio Lima** is an Associate Professor at the University of California, Davis. He earned his DVM from São Paulo State University, Brazil, in 2004, followed by a residency (2009), M.S. (2009), and Ph.D. (2013) from the University of Florida. Dr. Lima completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Cornell University in 2014. Before joining UC Davis, Dr. Lima was an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois. His research program focuses on improving dairy cow health, fertility, and production with emphasis on reproductive performance, antimicrobial stewardship, and host-genome and gut microbiome interactions affecting milk production and feed efficiency.

[Fábio Lima](#)



Deepak Dubey

**Deepak Dubey** received his M.S. from G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology and the Ph.D. in dairy cattle nutrition from the National Dairy Research Institute in India and completed an executive MBA at Vlerick Business School. Dr. Dubey has over 18 years of experience in ruminant nutrition, combining scientific expertise with strategic leadership. In his current role at Kemin, Dr. Dubey leads initiatives that bridge science and application launching precision nutrition technologies to improve dairy farm profitability.

[\(13\) Deepak Dubey | PhD | Executive MBA | LinkedIn](#)



Pieter Passchyn

**Pieter Passchyn** received his degree in veterinary medicine at Ghent University (Belgium) in 2001. He worked in veterinary practice for nine years in Torhout, Belgium. During that period his interest in herd health management increased, especially the relationship between health, production and nutrition. In 2010, he started his own consultancy business, Milk@vice, which focuses entirely on herd health management for dairy cattle. Pieter obtained his PhD in 2016 at Ghent University, Department of Obstetrics, Reproduction and Herd Health.

[\(13\) Pieter Passchyn | LinkedIn](#)



Jean-Baptiste Daniel

**Jean-Baptiste Daniel** is a research scientist at Trouw Nutrition in the Netherlands. Dr. Daniel is originally from France and completed the M.S. in animal sciences at Wageningen University in the Netherlands and the Ph.D. in animal nutrition at the University of Paris-Saclay in France in collaboration with the INRAe and Trouw Nutrition Research and Development. In 2016, Jean Baptiste joined Trouw Research and Development as a ruminant research scientist. His research combines modeling dairy cattle responses to nutrient supply with a heavy emphasis on mineral metabolism during late gestation and early lactation.

[\(14\) Jean-Baptiste Daniel | LinkedIn](#)





Mirja Wilkens

**Mirja Wilkens** is a Professor of Animal Nutrition at the University of Leipzig, Germany. She grew up on a family farmer that raised pigs in a high-density livestock region of northwestern Germany. She earned her veterinary degree at the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover and completed her doctoral thesis on gastrointestinal calcium transport in sheep in 2006. In 2016, she habilitated on the effects of dietary calcium, dietary DCAD, administration of vitamin D metabolites and lactation on mineral homeostasis. From 2019 to 2021, she held an interim professorship in Animal Nutrition Physiology at the Faculty for Agricultural Sciences, Göttingen University. In 2021, she was appointed Professor of Animal Nutrition, Nutrition Diseases and Dietetics at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Leipzig University. Her research focusses on mineral homeostasis and vitamin D metabolism across species.

[Mirja Wilkens](#)



Lance Baumgard

**Lance Baumgard** is a Distinguished Professor and the Normal Jacobson Professor of Nutritional Physiology in the Department of Animal Science at Iowa State University. Lance is a native of southwest Minnesota who grew up on a swine and row-crop farm. He has a B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. He joined the University of Arizona faculty as an Assistant Professor in the Fall of 2001 and joined Iowa State University in 2009. Lance and his wife Dr. Aileen Keating live in Ames with their two children.

[Dr. Lance Baumgard | Department of Animal Science](#)



Luiz Ferraretto

**Luiz Ferraretto** is an Associate Professor of dairy science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA. Originally from Brazil, he earned his B.S. in Animal Science from São Paulo State University in 2008. He completed the M.S. (2011) and Ph.D. (2015) in dairy science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, focusing on applied dairy nutrition and forage quality. After a postdoctoral appointment at the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute, he served as Assistant Professor of Livestock Nutrition at the University of Florida (2016–2020). His research focuses on applied ruminant nutrition and management, including starch and fiber utilization, forage quality, feed additives for lactating cows, and the development of on-farm and laboratory techniques for feed analysis.

[Luiz Ferraretto – Animal & Dairy Sciences](#)



Sebastian Salvatierra

**Sebastian Salvatierra** earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Sciences and Production from EAP Zamorano, Honduras, in 2024. He is currently pursuing the M.S. in Animal Sciences at the University of Florida under the supervision of Dr. José Eduardo P. Santos. His research focuses on dairy nutrition and physiology. His current research focuses on corn dried distillers' grains (DDGS) as a sustainable alternative to soybean protein ingredients in dairy cattle diets.

[People - UF/IFAS Animal Sciences - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS](#)



Kurt Cotanch

**Kurt Cotanch** is an independent dairy nutritionist working with the NDS Team since 2019, now NDS Americas. For NDS, Kurt assists with software training and nutritional advising for users of the program. He earned his MS at the University of Vermont (1989) and has since worked managing forage analytical labs, as a field nutritionist, and managed hay production and dairy farm operations of an artisan cheese producer. He was at WH Miner Institute for 17 years managing the forage lab, heavily involved in nutrition, chewing behavior and rumen fill trials. Much of his work focused on researching NDF digestibility and development of the CPM Feed library used as foundation of the CNCPS feedbank. On the side he officiates women's lacrosse.



Federico Tarnonsky

**Federico Tarnonsky** is a Ph.D. candidate in Animal Science at the University of Florida under the mentorship of Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo. Originally from Argentina, he earned his degree in Agricultural Engineering from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata and completed the M.S. at the University of Florida. His research focuses on silage-based diets, intake management, and health interventions, with a strong emphasis on applied, producer-oriented solutions for beef cattle systems. He is a 2022–2025 FFAR Fellow and has received multiple honors, including the Cornett Fellowship and the Edward E. Fischer Scholarship.

[People - UF/IFAS Animal Sciences - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences - UF/IFAS](#)

**David Weber** graduated from Kansas State University with a microbiology and Dairy Science background followed by a DVM degree. His degrees took him to Wisconsin and northeastern Iowa where he practiced for 15 years in dairy herd metrics, reproduction, milk quality and nutrition. During this time, David became very familiar with most current dairy nutrition modules. He eventually began an association with NDS which led him down a new path in the dairy technical support with industry companies. While he continues with some of his own general dairy nutrition practice, for the last 15 years, David has also led the NDS Americas team with teaching and training in multiple countries but mostly confined to North and South America.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-weber-721432113/>