

## Students Share Some Traditional and Some Unusual Experiences at GLS Internship Symposium

Each fall the students who have conducted their Grazing Livestock Systems internship in the past year give a presentation at the GLS Internship Symposium. The symposium always begins with a lunch hosted by the Center for Grassland Studies, the administrative home for the major. GLS students not only interact with each other, but also with department and college administrators, stakeholders (Brad Lang of Central Community College attended this year), and other guests during the lunch and the following roundtable discussion on the importance and role of internships.



*Chelsea Luthy*

The first presenter, Chelsea Luthy from Cody, had a unique internship because she had a unique situation. She and her husband welcomed their daughter into the world in August 2013. Since she will be graduating this December, she needed to complete her internship while pregnant. Her internship was a combination of tours of five Nebraska ranches, participation in the Nebraska Ranch Practicum (eight sessions over three seasons), and analyses of the business records and financial plan for her home ranch, which she and her husband will be taking over.

Next up was Kyle Schultz from Superior. Since he grew up on a farm, he said he didn't want to spend his

internship on the production side but wanted to be "on the other side of the fence." So at Aurora Coop, he started in the Animal Nutrition Division, and then, since he has an interest in the marketing aspect (agricultural economics minor), moved on to the Grain Marketing Division. This led to a mix of indoor and outdoor activities. Adding further variety, Kyle worked under and learned from various supervisors as well as the other 31 interns employed this past summer by the multi-officed company. While office work and meetings were not the most exciting or enjoyable for Kyle, he said he probably learned more during those times than when his work required him to be outdoors or on the road.

This seemed to be the year of multi-faceted internships. Caleb Miles from Thedford conducted the main portion of his GLS internship on the Lindskov-Thiel Ranch in Isabel, SD, one of the premiere Charolais bull producers in the world. One of his goals was to learn how the ranch managed during drought. That goal was thwarted when the ranch received several inches of above-normal moisture in 2013, looking about as good as it ever had! But there was still much to learn: new grasses and grazing systems, AI techniques and embryo programs, vertical integration and marketing, to name a few. Caleb next headed to the LK Ranch in Meeker, CO, which has a heifer development program as well as a hunting operation. The final phase of the internship was The Willow Creek Ranch (of Hole-In-The-Wall Gang fame), a 57,000-acre



working cattle and horse ranch near Kasey, WY that also, like LK Ranch, incorporates tourism (a la “City Slickers”) and fee-based hunting.



*Patrick Heerten*

Patrick Heerten’s home ranch in Springview uses May calving, and he wanted to see how another May calving operation worked, plus he said he wanted to work for a company that “wasn’t scared to break tradition and explore out-of-the-box ranching strategies.”

Those goals led him to Maddux Cattle Company in Imperial, NE. Patrick arranged his spring semester in a way that allowed him to begin his internship in March so he could acclimate himself to the ranch before calving started. Unlike Caleb, Patrick did get to see how the ranch managed drought, as it was another dry year and cattle had to be shipped “all over the place” to keep them on grass. For this reason Patrick said, “I didn’t get to observe their grazing system in its full glory, but I still picked up a lot of things.” Plus he got to spend a good deal of time on horseback, which he really enjoyed.

Our final presenter was William Frisby from Bellevue, the most non-traditional student we have had in the GLS program. He is a native of Louisiana and retired from the Air Force before coming back to school for his bachelor’s degree. William started his presentation by saying he had absolutely no background in farming or ranching going into this. His introduction to being around cattle was in

his animal science classes and working at UNL’s Agricultural Research and Development Center. His main internship goals were to learn about cattle — how you select, manage and treat them, and about good recordkeeping that makes an operation successful. While his wife and children stayed in Bellevue, William headed to Plum Thicket Farms in Gordon, NE, which has as its mission: “to produce high quality cattle, forage, and grain with management practices that foster the best stewardship of our land, our livestock, our soil, and our human resources.” Retired veterinarian Nancy Peterson, who owns the ranch with husband, Rex, was a great teacher, but the best teacher was a feisty calf. “The first thing I learned is that calves have four hooves,” he said, as he showed a photo of blood running down his cheek after he learned the hard way how to hold a calf properly... and that was on his first day! Nancy also took William to educational events such as a tour of ranches sponsored by the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition and the Nebraska Cattlemen summer meeting. “Never having experienced any of it, I needed to know as much as possible in the short time I had,” William said. His final slide stated that the internship exceeded his learning expectations, and “allowed my heart to soar,” followed in small print by: “although I haven’t had to check cows at minus 20 degrees yet.”



*William Frisby*

## Student Profiles .....

**Sydney Gehl** from Ericson was a junior at Wheeler Central High School when she placed in the state range judging contest, earning her a \$500 scholarship if she came to UNL as a Grazing Livestock Systems major. Her path was not a direct one, as she first used a livestock judging team scholarship to attend Butler Community College in Kansas and earn an associate’s degree. Being the organized person that she is, she had filed that GLS scholarship certificate in a safe place, and



*Sydney Gehl*

when she came to UNL this fall as a dual GLS and Animal Science student, she presented that certificate and received her scholarship.

In high school, Sydney was involved in several activities including FFA, 4-H and speech, and was a member of the National Honor Society. She was familiar with the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and some of its faculty, having participated in numerous Extension events, livestock judging camps and the Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute. She also attended the CASNR “Experience the Power of Red” open house. She always knew she would go on for her bachelor’s degree, but she graduated in a class of nine people,

and the smaller classes plus the livestock judging team scholarship that covered tuition and books made Butler a perfect fit for her to begin her college career. Interestingly, the assistant team coach at Butler is now at UNL, and Sydney, who is in the judging class this semester, will soon be a member of the UNL livestock judging team. She is happy to be part of the CASNR “family” for her final two years as an undergraduate student.

Although she enjoys livestock handling, because she is so familiar with that aspect of ranching, Sydney thinks she will pursue a GLS internship that will expose her to more of the business management side of an operation.

At the moment she is open to various career choices: ranch manager (perhaps eventually ownership), ag lending, working for a government agency such as FSA or NRCS... as long as it is in the general area of central Nebraska. There’s no place like home!

One hundred fifty. That’s the number of days **Ashtyn Shrewsbury**, Nebraska FFA vice president, is committed to activities related to FFA, including visits to 22 chapters in northeast Nebraska during this school year and participating in the national FFA convention in Louisville, KY in November. She is well prepared to carry out the duties of her office; she was president of her Alliance High School FFA chapter for two years. Other high school activities



*Ashtyn Shrewsbury*

included president of her National Honor Society chapter, vice president of her class, varsity golf, basketball and band. She has continued that high level of involvement at UNL where she is a member of the Block & Bridle, Ag Education, and UNL FFA Alumni Clubs as well as Husker Food Connection (helping people know more about where their food comes from). Combined with her FFA officer duties and her dual GLS/Animal Science major, the freshman has a lot of balls to keep in the air!

Ashtyn was involved with the family operation north of Ellsworth “for as long as I can remember. I just did whatever needed to be done,” she said.

Last year she attended the CASNR open house, although she was already set on coming to UNL and had not applied anywhere else. “I knew the quality of CASNR was outstanding,” she said. “The interactions between faculty and students give it a small-town feel.”

Initially she was focused on ruminant nutrition, but she is now leaning toward feed sales and thinks she would like to someday have her own feed store. She believes the GLS major, with its combination of animal science, plant science and business, will help her achieve that career goal.

Through FFA, Ashtyn was part of a mission trip to Haiti where her group helped an all-girl orphanage. One of the things they did was build rabbit hutches so rabbits could be sold to help fund the orphanage. “The experience made me realize how much we take for granted. They have so little, and yet are so excited and thankful for the bare minimum that they do have,” she said. Given her history of involvement and service, we suspect it was not the last mission trip for Ashtyn!

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## Nebraska Ranch Practicum an Amazing Experience

*by Chelsea Luthy*

I have the privilege of participating in the Nebraska Ranch Practicum this year. I applied for the Practicum because my husband and I are beginning ranchers and the topics complement my Grazing Livestock Systems studies. The program is eight sessions long from summer through winter.

The material presented has been a great mixture of ranching as a system. My favorite topics include calving, weaning, managing for market risk, and the economics behind decision making. The best part of the program is the hands-on learning approach. In determining body condition score of cattle, participants actually feel

the animals to assess fat. It’s great that everyone can be involved in the learning process.

Learning is excellent in the classroom and in the field. I’m enjoying this fieldwork, and the other participants bring great questions and scenarios to make me think about what I would do in particular circumstances like drought. If you have any inkling to take this course, I’d recommend doing it! Also, if you have any questions about my experience, I’d love to answer them. So far the Nebraska Ranch Practicum has been an amazing learning opportunity.

Editor’s Note: For more information, see [nebraskaranchpracticum.unl.edu](http://nebraskaranchpracticum.unl.edu). GLS students may apply for an event scholarship, as Chelsea did, to help cover some of the registration fee (talk to your GLS adviser).

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## Brink Receives ASAS Fellow Award

Dr. Dennis Brink, one of the founding faculty members of the Grazing Livestock Systems major, recently received the prestigious American Society of Animal Science's Fellow Award, which is presented to animal scientists who have made excellent contributions to the animal industry and have had continuous membership in the ASAS for a minimum of 25 years.

Since he came to UNL in 1978 Brink has taught nutrition, management and physiology classes. He also is current president of the UNL chapter of Gamma

Sigma Delta, an honor society that recognizes faculty and students in agriculture and related sciences.

Brink plays a major role in recruitment, teaching and advising both Animal Science and Grazing Livestock Systems students, and we congratulate him for adding yet one more award to his long list of special recognitions.



*Dennis Brink*

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