

GLS Hosts Southeast Community College Students for Grandin Pre-talk

Faculty who work with the GLS program were happy to host 31 students and a few of their instructors from Southeast Community College-Beatrice prior to the lecture given by Dr. Temple Grandin (see related article this issue). SCC instructor Mark Goes, who is also on the GLS Stakeholders Board, brought the students to a session during which issues they were about to hear Grandin address in her presentation were discussed. This was also an opportunity for the SCC students to learn about the Grazing Livestock Systems major from both the faculty who teach our courses and from current GLS students. Some of the SCC students are considering pursuit of a bachelor's degree after their time at the two-year institution, and we want them to consider what UNL in general, and the GLS major in particular, have to offer. Not only that, we got to do all of this while enjoying Valentino's pizza!

Thanks to Mark Goes for helping to arrange the fun and informative evening.



Dr. Dennis Brink, professor of animal science, sets the stage for the talk these students are about to hear from Dr. Temple Grandin on livestock handling and animal welfare.

Student Profiles

"Grandpa" was a big influence on **Cory Peters'** decision to select a major dealing with cattle. "Since my freshman year in high school, I knew I wanted to work with cows," Cory said. His family runs a small cow-calf and row-crop operation in Hickman, NE. He even has a few cows and horses of his own. At Norris High School, he was a member of the National Honor Society and was involved in FFA and 4-H.



Cory Peters

Cory entered UNL as an Animal Science major in Fall 2011. His academic adviser, Dr. Bryan Reiling, talked to him about his career objective, which is to manage a cow-calf enterprise for someone, and hopefully, eventually have his own operation. Dr. Reiling recommended he consider adding the Grazing Livestock Systems major, which he did at the start of his sophomore year. And because he says "I'll always have horses," he's thinking of adding the equine option to his animal science degree.

Cory really enjoys being in the Nebraska Beef Industry



Student Profiles (continued)

Scholars Program, a four-year certification program for UNL students that aims to improve beef education and research in the state. In connection with that, he went to western Nebraska to visit with some producers. Although he grew up in eastern Nebraska, he really liked the western landscape and will be seeking an internship there this summer. He appreciates the opportunities to network that being in the Beef Scholars program gives him. Other activities at UNL include working at the meat lab and horse judging.

As one might expect, Cory's favorite classes include those on animal and land management. He is learning about grasses and the role they play in animal nutrition. He is even beginning to develop some range management techniques and do a little experimenting with what he feeds his horses.

Dr. Reiling also encouraged Cory to apply for an Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences (UCARE) project, for which he received funding. With a goal of increasing agricultural literacy, he is working on short "farm-to-plate" videos. Currently he is working with a nearby dairy farm, but the project might expand to include a beef cattle operation.

Nebraska Beef Industry Scholars Program, UCARE, high quality of education, caring and involved faculty, access to internship opportunities, networking... these are some of the reasons Cory is glad he came to UNL.

Ben Hansen grew up on a farm/ranch in Chappell, NE where his family has about 2500 acres in a corn-wheat rotation and a herd of 150 cows. Ben and his brother and grandpa own 50 of those cows, which he

said is helping pay for his college.

Like many who come from small rural areas, Ben was involved in multiple sports as well as 4-H in high school. His graduating class was one of the biggest in his school's history: 30!

While he liked working with his cows, Ben was convinced he would head down a different career path. He liked math and tinkering in the shop. "I thought I wanted to be an engineer in a big city," he said. So he came to UNL in August 2011 as an Agricultural Engineering major. It wasn't long before he was echoing Dorothy's sentiment: *there's no place like home!* He surprised himself by realizing: "I miss home and I miss my cows!" He began exploring alternatives and liked what he saw on the GLS web site about the integration of animal and range sciences with agricultural economics. After speaking with Dr. Bryan Reiling, he switched to GLS his second semester. This semester he is also working in the university's cow-calf research unit.

Ben really likes East Campus. When he used to visit his brother, an Agronomy major, he thought it "seemed like home... like its own community."

"I would like to have all of my classes on East Campus," he said. So far his favorite classes have been Fundamentals of Animal Biology taught by Dr. Reiling and Anatomy and Physiology of Domestic Animals taught by Dr. Dennis Brink, another adviser for the GLS program.

Ben hopes to do his internship on a ranch in Texas or Montana, and upon graduation, would like to work for another ranch before possibly returning home to work the cattle side of the family operation.



Ben Hansen

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

There are multiple opportunities for students to add to their education outside of the classroom. Two such events related to grazing for which GLS students can apply for partial scholarships are listed below. See the web sites for details on the events.

Nebraska Grazing Conference, August 13-14, 2013, Kearney, nebraskagrazingconference.unl.edu. Many presenters from multiple states. Past GLS students who have attended (and in some cases, presented) have found this event extremely valuable.

Nebraska Ranch Practicum, North Platte and Whitman, eight dates June 2013-January 2014, nebraskaranch-practicum.unl.edu. Three-season, hands-on sessions teach how to use decision support tools to evaluate management and marketing alternatives dealing with grazing strategies and many other aspects of ranching. Application deadline is May 3, and enrollment is limited.

Grandin: Livestock Industry Has Improved Handling, Needs to Tell Its Story Better

LINCOLN, Neb. — The U.S. beef industry has made huge strides in livestock handling in recent years but has done a poor job explaining that to the public, said leading animal behavior expert Temple Grandin Tuesday.

Grandin encouraged the industry to be more transparent with the general public. “Ag has done a rotten job of communicating,” she added.

Grandin spoke at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln as part of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources’ Heuermann Lectures.

Grandin, an animal sciences professor at Colorado State University, has had a major impact on the meat and livestock industries worldwide through her research, development and outreach on use of low-stress, behavior-based livestock handling techniques and design of animal handling facilities.

Half the cattle in North America are handled in equipment she has designed for meat plants, said Ronnie Green, Harlan vice chancellor of IANR and University of Nebraska vice president for agriculture and natural resources.

Grandin said her autism has played a key role in her work because it attunes her to visual details that can distress cattle, pigs and other livestock but go unnoticed by most people.

Changes in flooring surface, reflections, shadows, even something as simple as a dangling chain all can unnerve animals and make them harder to handle, Grandin said.

“I got down in the chute to see what the cattle were seeing,” she recalled. “People thought that was crazy.”

Grandin said livestock handling in the ‘70s and ‘80s was terrible, but both equipment and management practices are vastly better now. However, both the media and public still seize on occasional instances of mishandling and treat them as if they are the rule rather than the exception.

“One of the things that frustrates me is we’ve improved a lot of this and nobody knows about it,” Grandin said. “When I first started, maybe 10 to 20 percent did a decent job of handling animals. Now it’s 80 percent.”

“I go into the meat plants now and it’s quiet like church.”

The key for livestock handlers is to understand animal behavior to get them to voluntarily do what they want them to do, rather than exerting force, Grandin told the standing-room-only crowd at Hardin Hall.

Grandin also has developed animal welfare guidelines for the meat industry and consults with McDonalds, Wendy’s International, Burger King and other companies on animal welfare. She said animal-welfare guidelines must be specific and clearly worded and based on what is “directly observable.”

She encouraged the industry to share the progress it’s made with the public.

Grandin had a unique opportunity to do just that when HBO made a movie about her life starring Claire Danes. During Hollywood media interviews, she found reporters to be fascinated about meat processing.

Thanks to that movie, Grandin is at least as famous for her triumph over autism as for her livestock work. Her busy day at UNL included visits with student groups involved in speech pathology and educating exceptional children.

Heuermann Lectures in IANR are made possible by a gift from B. Keith and Norma Heuermann of Phillips, long-time university supporters with a strong commitment to Nebraska’s production agriculture, natural resources, rural areas and people.

The lectures are archived at heuermannlectures.unl.edu shortly after the lecture, and broadcast on NET2 World at a date following the lecture.



Dr. Temple Grandin captivated an overflowing crowd who listened to her discuss what and how she learned about livestock handling and other animal welfare issues. (Photo credit Tom Slocum)

My Experience with Nebraska Ranch Practicum

By Patrick Heerten, GLS Student

From June 2011 to January 2012 I had the pleasure of attending the Nebraska Ranch Practicum. The practicum is put on by UNL to better an individual's ranch management skills. This is done through eight days of hands-on experience working with aspects of grazing strategies, risk management, calving and weaning dates, livestock nutrition, cull cow management, and supplementation.

One of the benefits of this short course is how spread out it is over the course of the year. Participants have the opportunity to watch and be a part of different stages of production throughout the seasons of the year. It also was an extremely fun program because it was not all just "book learning;" it can all be applied in real life situations.

An important take-home message for me was to always look at things from a systems approach. By changing one small aspect of management — whether it be supplementation, calving date, weaning date, or pasture management, you affect your whole beef production system. This is one principle I plan on bringing to my

own operation. By examining each detail of my production system, I can determine whether or not each aspect complements others in such a way as to maximize efficiency and profitability so I can sustainably produce beef in the future.

Another important part of this program, if not *the* most important, is the interaction with other participants in the program. Discussion among participants is where a large amount of learning takes place.

Overall the Nebraska Ranch Practicum is an excellent way to further your education and better yourself as a beef producer. I would recommend this course to absolutely anyone with an interest in the beef industry.

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