

Learning Opportunities Outside the Classroom

There are multiple opportunities for students to add to their education outside of the classroom. Here are three such events related to grazing. See the websites for details.

Nebraska Grazing Conference, August 9-10, 2016, Kearney, nebraskagrazingconference.unl.edu. Many presenters from multiple states will be on the program for this 16th annual event. 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 2016 - January 2017, nebraskaranchpracticum.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 8, and enrollment is limited.

Nebraska Range Shortcourse, June 20-24, 2016, Chadron State College, agronomy.unl.edu/nebraska-range-short-course-2016. The week-long course focuses on the principles of range ecology and management and the efficient use of rangeland resources for a variety of purposes.

Congrats to Brink, Reiling and Schacht

GLS advisors Dennis Brink, Bryan Reiling and Walter Schacht are among the recipients of this year's UNL Parents Recognition Awards. The annual recognition is the result of parents' nomination of an employee who has made a significant difference in their student's life.

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For more information or to receive GLS materials, please contact:

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Bre Lewis New to the GLS Team

AIn January Breane Lewis joined the Grazing Livestock Systems team as a graduate assistant, charged with developing recruitment and retention strategies for multidisciplinary majors, using GLS as a model program.

Bre graduated from UNL in December 2014 with a B.S. in Insect Science and Applied Science. She is currently enrolled in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication Department, and will be focusing on Leadership Studies and Education for her master's degree.

Born in Walnut Creek, CA, Bre has lived in Lincoln from a young age and calls it home. She has strong connections to the agriculture industry, with



Bre Lewis

grandparents, aunts and cousins owning cattle and farming operations near Fullerton, NE. She enjoys spending time with her family and young daughter, reading, and spending time at the lake. Her academic interests include the public's perceptions and misconceptions of the agriculture industry, minority representation in agriculture, and factors that influence recruitment into ag-related programs.

Through updated materials, increasing presence at recruitment events, and establishing a strong feeling of connection between current GLS students, faculty and staff, Bre hopes to encourage interest and increase awareness about the major.



Student Profiles

While not from a farm or ranch, **Austin Holliday**'s dad did get his bachelor's degree from UNL in Animal Science, after which he worked for a swine production company. However, it was cattle that he enjoyed most, and Austin learned to enjoy the several "hobby" cows they raised on their 40 acres of land in Fairbury, NE.



Austin Holliday

As Austin was working toward an associate's degree in diversified agriculture at Southeast Community College-Beatrice, he was pretty sure he would go on to obtain a bachelor's degree, but was leaning more toward natural resources – perhaps leading to a job with the National Park Service. But then he conducted his SCC internship at the Bar Arrow Cattle Co. in Kansas and realized how much he liked handling cattle – sorting, vaccinating, checking for sick calves, etc. He also heard his SCC instructor Mark Goes talk in class one day about the Grazing Livestock Systems major at UNL, and he read one of these "Blade" newsletters. All of that, plus two parents who are UNL alumni, led Austin to the conclusion that the GLS major at UNL was right for him. He met with Dr. Dennis Brink at New Student Enrollment (who, interestingly, was his dad's academic advisor!) and started his UNL career this semester. While taking a full class load, he is also getting his cattle handling "fix" working part time at UNL's Agricultural Research and Development Center.

For his GLS internship, which he will likely do in 2017, Austin would like to work on a diversified operation, perhaps in another state. For both his internship and his post-graduation career, he has two main requirements: work with cattle and be outdoors (like we haven't heard that before)!

Blaine Petersen from Cozad, NE, was raised on a small acreage where family acquaintances helped to get him involved in showing cattle through 4-H at the age of 8. He also participated in many 4-H competitions such as meats judging and livestock – having some success at the state level. It was through 4-H activities that he became familiar with the UNL East Campus.

His early exposure to cattle came through his father and uncles who are all involved in the beef industry from the cow/calf level to transportation. His family is currently involved in a chronic cattle procurement niche of the market that puts together time-sensitive groups of cattle to be processed and/or slaughtered.

By age 13 Blaine was working for the Uden family of Lexington, NE, helping with small tasks on their cow/calf operation. That same year he was also able to procure a loan through the FSA office to purchase his first five cows. The Uden family graciously sold him these cows and agreements were made so his cows could be run with the rest of the herd during the summer months.

Blaine looked up to Andrew Uden and other older friends who had graduated from the UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. They encouraged him to consider CASNR for his college degree, and in December 2013 he came for a campus visit during which he met with Dr. Bryan Reiling, a faculty member in the Department of Animal Science and also an advisor for the Grazing Livestock Systems major. After listening to Blaine talk about his interests and goals, Reiling advised him to consider a double major in GLS and Animal Science, which is just what he did. Now in his fourth semester at UNL, Blaine is a Morrill Scholar (see casnr.unl.edu/justin-smith-morrill-scholars) and participates in the Nebraska Beef Industry Scholars Program (see animalscience.unl.edu/nebraska-beef-industry-scholars).

Blaine will attend a clinic this spring to become A.I. certified prior to returning home to work for the Uden family again this summer. For his GLS internship in 2017, he would like to work for a highly managed intensive grazing operation.

"I like learning how to read the cattle and adapt to the environment," Blaine said. Whether he ends up building his own herd or managing an operation for someone else, those and the other skills he'll learn while working toward his UNL degree will be put to good use!



Blaine Petersen

Research/Education Priorities Identified at Beef Workshop

Nebraska continues to prove itself a leader in setting directions for education and research in beef production. More than 70 people from UNL, USDA, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and the beef industry throughout the state gathered in Lincoln in January to identify priority areas for future scientific inquiry, education and technical assistance in beef production systems.

Jim Robb with the Livestock Marketing Information Center in Denver, CO, set the stage by discussing the market situation and outlook for beef cattle and corn on a global basis. Animal scientist Jim MacDonald and range scientist (and Grazing Livestock Systems advisor) Walter Schacht reviewed new and existing UNL research in beef production systems to help the audience identify knowledge gaps. Innovative producers Fred Bruning and Dave Hamilton each shared how his operation has adapted to the changing production and market environments, and discussed what they saw as challenges and opportunities for increased profitability and expansion of beef enterprises.

In two sets of table discussions – one focused on perennial grassland systems (rangelands) and one on integrated crop/livestock systems – workshop participants were asked: What does Nebraska provide that makes it a leader and is critical to continued growth of the beef industry in this state? What are the gaps in knowledge, tools and education/communication programs that limit forage and animal production in beef systems?

Dominant themes emerging from the discussions on beef production from perennial grassland systems included:

- The size of our perennial grasslands is declining; however, demand placed on grasslands as a forage resource for cattle production is increasing.
- Forage production on these perennial grasslands likely will not increase, so the efficiency of harvest by grazing cattle needs to increase through the development of more management-intensive grazing strategies/systems.
- The average age of landowners and managers is approaching

60. The effective transfer of ownership and knowledge to the next generation must be realized. An experienced and educated management and labor force is critical to a sustained beef cattle industry.

- We need effective educational programs to disseminate information on proven management strategies and technologies.

Beef cattle production in much of eastern Nebraska needs to be integrated into the dominant cropland systems. Relative to beef cattle production, regions dominated by cropland present an entirely different situation than areas dominated by perennial grasslands; therefore, there is a different set of themes and priorities:

- Explore how the diversity of feed resources (e.g., pastureland, forage crops, cornstalks, and ethanol co-products) can be integrated into year-round cattle feeding programs.
- Identify cattle enterprises (e.g., spring or fall calving) that are best adapted to the production and market environments of integrated crop/livestock production systems.
- Evaluate the production economics of different feed/forage types and management strategies that are critical components of crop/livestock systems.
- Many producers lack the expertise and resources to successfully develop and manage integrated crop/livestock operations. Again, educational programs in this area are needed.

Interested in being part of this discussion and growing your abilities in managing and/or studying beef production systems that include grazing lands, forages, croplands, and cattle? Come to the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at UNL where nationally-recognized faculty work closely with each other as well as state and federal researchers and educators to stay on the cutting edge of scientific discovery and delivery of information that will help advance the beef industry.



Jim MacDonald (left) and Walter Schacht gave summaries of UNL research on resource utilization for beef production systems.



Banker and farmer Frank Bruning (left) from Bruning, NE and rancher Dave Hamilton from Theadford, NE each provided a producer's perspective at the beef systems workshop.

