

Variety of Experiences Featured at GLS Internship Symposium

A key component of the GLS major is the required internship that includes a formal planning process during which goals for the internship are identified, the work experience itself, and presenting at the annual Grazing Livestock Systems Internship Symposium.

At the 2011 symposium, ranch manager Chip Ramsay told the students that while learning core competencies in the classroom is very important, “it won’t teach you things like how to prioritize when you have multiple responsibilities “...like you have 900 heifers that will calve over the next 28 days and a herd of yearlings you need to move and a herd of heifers to move out, and need to make all of this work with your grazing plan,” Ramsay said. “The internship marries the science from the classroom to the day-to-day functions of the operation, and teaches you how the whole system fits together.”

Seven students presented at the 2014 symposium held on campus November 21. The first two conducted their GLS internships with Lone Creek Cattle Company, but in very different capacities.

Being from northeastern Nebraska, **Miles Anderson** knew all about the monoculture of smooth brome pastures, so one of his internship goals was to become familiar with grazing management in the Sandhills. Another goal was to learn heifer selection and development skills. Miles also wanted to get a close



Miles Anderson

look at the financial aspect of running a ranch. Those goals led him to Lone Creek’s Pullman Ranch in Cherry County, where he experienced some “firsts” related to weather: tornado, wildfire, and seeing what lightning does to an electric fence! Another skill he developed while carrying out his duties: roping! His favorite part of the internship was breeding season during which he helped with several aspects and even was allowed to AI ten cows.



Cory Peters

Cory Peters had worked at Lone Creek’s ranch in Cody, NE, the previous summer, so for his official GLS internship he chose to work in the company’s corporate office in Lincoln so that he could learn more about the business side of the company – how management decisions are made, seedstock development and record keeping systems as well as simply learning more about the company’s all-natural,

double-muscle (lean yet tender) Piedmontese breed that originated in Italy. He became proficient in the use of the Excel software program and in data analysis, which had a nice carry-over benefit for his school work! Since one of his goals was to figure out if he would like a career with the company, he spoke with many current employees and learned as much as he could about it. In that process, he determined it would be best to pursue a master’s degree while



Nebraska last year necessitated the selling of his cows, but Matt still gets his “cow fix” while here at UNL by working part time on a former neighbor’s farm near Lincoln, which has beef cattle as its sole enterprise.



Matt Grimes

When Matt made his UNL campus visit, he was unaware of the GLS major, but when he spoke of his interests and plans, it was suggested to him that he explore GLS, which he did when he returned home. The combination of plants and animals along with the entrepreneurial/business education sounded like the right major for him.

And speaking of entrepreneurship, Matt applied and was accepted into the UNL Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program, which is focused on helping young people “transform the resources of our nation’s strength in agriculture into the next big idea” (see engler.unl.edu). As part of that program, he is currently working on start-up plans for a cattle operation and will compare that to sheep to analyze profit ratios.

Matt hopes to return to his now-relocated family farm after college and incorporate cows into the business using rented pasture land. His GLS education coupled with his entrepreneurial experience and training will help Matt achieve his goal!

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GLS Internship Symposium (continued)

continuing in some capacity with Lone Creek.

It was back to the ranch for our third presenter, but in another state. **Ben Hansen** went to Montana for his internship with the E. L. Peterson Ranch. His overall goal was to see how a successful ranch manages its cattle, finances and decisions regarding herd genetics, replacement heifers, marketing and recordkeeping. To the question about what courses he had taken that he found beneficial during the internship, Ben reported: his agricultural economics classes helped him understand when, where and why the livestock were marketed the way they were; reproductive physiology helped him understand the AI system and reasons for certain management decisions that affected the reproductive efficiency of the livestock; and his agronomy classes aided him in identifying and understanding the forage mixes being grown for feed. Ben plans to expand his own cow/calf operation and apply much of what he learned during his internship.



Ben Hansen



Marshall Simmons

Marshall Simmons also did an out-of-state internship. At the Buck Island Ranch in Florida, things were done very differently than what he was used to on his family's ranch near the western Nebraska town of Valentine. Marshall's goals included increasing his knowledge and skills in rotational grazing systems and low-stress cattle handling techniques. His job required him to do quite a bit of cattle moving; his past experience on his family operation came in handy, as did his animal science courses, including the one that taught about flight zone of the animal and the ability to use the point of balance to move cattle with ease. He also became a better horse rider, since his tasks required him to be on one every day. As is the case with many GLS students who grew up on a family farm/ranch, Marshall learned so much by being an employee on another operation; it definitely changed his perspective on many levels! He was able to bring a wealth



Blake Thomsen

of knowledge and experience back to his home ranch after he graduated in December 2014. **Blake Thomsen** conducted his internship on the University-owned Gudmundsen Sandhills Lab, a 13,000-acre research and education ranch near Whitman, NE. In addition to learning what things might work and what might not work on a possible operation of his own, Blake said the experience also taught him how to work with other people.

The USDA Extension Service is a potential career for GLS students, and **Cara Crandell** chose to do her internship with Nebraska Extension. She split work between two neighboring extension offices: Kearney and Franklin. Cara learned how to use her animal science knowledge to present complicated agricultural concepts in a way that youth can understand. She helped create the workshop, "What Killed Bessie?" In the process of going through the different systems in a cow's body and diseases that could have caused this fictional animal to die, Cara engaged the youth in discussions about nutrition, reproduction, animal husbandry and weather issues, and even did some dissections. She also was a coach for the Franklin/Kearney County Skill-a-thon team for the Premier Animal Science Event (PASE) held on UNL's East Campus. Her internship experiences taught her that she has a genuine passion for working with kids and helping them learn about their animal 4-H projects.



Cara Crandell

Do I have a passion for and want a career in agricultural lending? That's what our last presenter of the day wanted to find out with her internship. **Kyra Baldwin** wanted to learn all the steps involved in administering a loan. She also wanted a behind-the-scenes look at the agricultural lending department as well as other departments at a bank. She accomplished those goals at the Platte Valley Bank in Scottsbluff, NE. The first month was spent in several different



Kyra Baldwin

departments where she learned what each does, and the other two months were in the agricultural lending department. She accompanied lenders on 20 farm inspections throughout the summer. GLS students are required to complete a special project during their internship. Kyra used the increased skill she gained at the bank with the Excel program to create a file that assesses risk of an agricultural portfolio – the ability of a customer to repay a loan in the face of things like fluctuating market prices. The bank is now able to use this as an internal measurement tool. The answer to the question is yes – her internship helped her discover she does want a career in agricultural finance. As a side note, Kyra is president of the UNL Range Management Club and led the club in attending the 2015 Society for Range Management meeting in Sacramento, CA, Feb. 1-5. She was on UNL's Undergraduate Range Management Exam team that finished 1st out of 22 teams at the meeting!

"You can always learn something more."

Student Profiles

Lance Johnson knew since he was very young that he wanted to return to the family farm in Up-land, NE – a 3,000-acre operation with about 250 cow/calf pairs. As is the case with many UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students, he was involved in FFA and 4-H. He always thought of Lincoln as a "huge" city, and when it came time to decide on college, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture seemed a better fit for him than UNL.

As he was pursuing his associate's degree at NCTA, he began buying cows as a way of working into the family business, which also helped him realize he wanted to continue his formal education after two years. He figured if he planned to manage the farm someday, he'd better learn more aspects of the business, including the range management and economics side of things. NCTA instructor Dave Smith, who was on the GLS Stakeholders Board before his

recent retirement, talked about the GLS major in one of his classes, after which Lance spoke with him individually about it. Getting the diversity of knowledge the GLS offered seemed like a good idea for a future farm manager. When Lance did enter UNL as a GLS student in fall 2013, he realized that East Campus is more like a small town – something we hear a lot from CASNR students.

Lance will conduct his GLS internship this summer at Arrowhead Ranch near Whitman, NE. Owners Kevin and Rosemary Anderson have hosted interns in the past and know how to be educators as well as employers for these students. Lance's internship goals include learning about the ranch's heifer development and A.I. programs



Lance Johnson

as well as how they utilize their pivot systems to irrigate their forages – all things that are or will be utilized on his family farm.

Most GLS students make use of learning opportunities outside of the classroom. Lance is no exception. While attending UNL, he is working on a farm outside of Lincoln – seeing how things are done there. He also attended the 2014 Nebraska Grazing Conference in Kearney last August; he likes learning about animal handling, so he found the demonstration by "horse whisperer" Curt Pate from Texas and the discussion by a panel of Nebraska producers on low-stress animal handling techniques of particular interest. While he had heard Pate before, Lance said "you can always learn something more." That's the right attitude, Lance!

As **Matt Grimes** was growing up on a farm north of Lincoln, he participated in 4-H and FFA, especially enjoying livestock judging activities. As a youth, he bought (with a loan from dad) a couple of beef cows, and built that up to 14 by the end of high school. Not only did he have to purchase the animals, he had to find pasture to rent, since the family operation consisted only of row crops. A baling business with a friend helped finance some of his "cattle enterprise." A move of his family farm to south central