

# GRLS Internship: Intern and Provider Perspectives

**Caden Billings** is a junior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying Grazing Livestock Systems, a program requiring students to participate in an internship as part of their coursework. This summer, Caden completed an internship at Daybreak Ranch located near Highmore, South Dakota. Daybreak Ranch is operated by **Jim and Carol Faulstich**, along with their daughter and son-in-law. The main focus of the ranch is a red angus cow/calf operation, which is supplemented by the custom grazing of yearlings, farming and two hunting enterprises.

When asked why he agreed to host an intern Jim said, "First, because Caden asked if we would host him. Secondly, I see the importance in connecting future ag leaders and providers with successful businesses to learn from their experiences and expertise." Jim feels every degree program should require at least one year of interning with providers willing to share. "Even though an intern requires some of my time, I think there is value in working and teaching side-by-side to help young people help future generations," added Faulstich.

While at Daybreak Ranch, Caden was responsible for checking cattle health, monitoring water and forage resources, making recommendations for rotational grazing moves, watching fence conditions, as well as the general day-to-day operation and management of the ranch. Through these activities, Jim hoped Caden would benefit by gaining new ideas and an appreciation for taking a holistic approach to management and decision-making and the importance of the environment through practices such as regenerating soil health and grazing management.

From Caden's perspective, he benefited from the internship by gaining a better understanding of the importance of grassland evaluation and conservation. He learned how multi-species grazing can be beneficial for grasslands, how a no-till farming operation can harmonize with a cow/calf operation and the importance of HRM principles. Increased knowledge of native grasses, forbs and shrubs of South Dakota and Nebraska was a benefit, as were ideas on dealing with seasonal weather challenges from a cow/calf and farming standpoint. Faulstich even provided Caden with information on how to outfit deer and pheasant hunts in the Prairie Pothole Region of South Dakota.

Enhanced communication is a benefit any student will gain in completing an internship, according to Caden. "Internships force students to be clear about what they want in an internship and makes them responsible for communicating those ideas to several possible providers to obtain an experience that meets their needs," offered Caden. Jumping into an operation and working with new people provides growing pains related to communication. However, this was a positive for Caden, who went on to say, "In my opinion, the more a young person can put themselves into uncomfortable situations, the more personal growth they will have, which will prepare them for a broader unforeseeable future of challenges."

Besides attending to daily ranch activities, Jim encouraged Caden to participate in educational events to make him more knowledgeable as an intern and as a future rancher. For Jim, knowledge and involvement are important. "I hope an intern leaving Daybreak Ranch would appreciate the value in being involved and a leader in the community, state and nation."



**Caden Billings with Jim Faulstich of Daybreak Ranch**

Caden commented that exposure to the South Dakota Grassland Coalition (SDGC) events was the cherry on top of his internship. Through the SDGC he was able to participate in bird tours, pasture walks, a low stress stockmanship class and an introductory HRM class. Caden hopes to stay connected to the SDGC, and to become involved in the Nebraska Grazinglands Coalition.

As Caden reflects on his internship experience, he appreciates how doors were opened for him as a person and how he was exposed to new ideas. "Jumping into a foreign operation and seeing tasks accomplished in a different fashion can provide answers and ideas that may be applicable to my own ranch problems in the future," commented Caden.

As for Jim, "We enjoyed Caden's interest in our operation and his intense desire to learn. His many questions challenged me to think about our operation, and I think both of us ended the internship period with new ideas and enthusiasm. It was a pleasure."