

# GRLS Internship: Intern and Provider Perspectives



Colten Bergt

The Grazing Livestock Systems (GRLS) degree program provides a unique opportunity for students to obtain hands-on experience and training in areas related to livestock, range, and economics management. Part of the student experience is to complete a required internship between their junior and senior year in school.

**Colten Bergt** is a senior from Amherst, NE pursuing degrees in Grazing Livestock Systems and Animal Science. This summer, Colten interned with **Jim Jenkins** of Callaway, NE and gained experience in how to market cattle, utilize a management-intensive rotational grazing system, and the importance of keeping good livestock records. The Jenkins enterprise consists of JJ & SE Jenkins, LLC, which handles land, equipment, and facilities, and Ten Cattle Company, LLC, focusing on running stockers and finishing between 2,500 and 3,000 cattle.

Colten, who comes from a cow/calf and feedlot operation, obtained a new look at a different stage of raising cattle. "I enjoyed gaining the experience of a different cattle sector such as the stocker business," said Colten. Learning about and discussing how Jim markets cattle was a benefit for Colten. Jim had Colten sitting in on weekly calls to his broker to learn about the market's movement and how and when to maneuver within the market to minimize risk. "It seemed like we talked cattle and corn markets nearly every other day during the internship," commented Colten. Jim echoed this idea noting, "Colten proved himself to be well read and open to discussing different ideas. Because of his maturity and interest, we spent a lot of time discussing trade issues, tax policy, and other societal issues impacting the beef industry."



Jim Jenkins

Jim began working with interns because he believes in making an investment in youth by giving them opportunities to hone their skills in production agriculture. One of his goals for interns is to make sure they understand that a successful business requires good execution across a number of disciplines, such as marketing and risk management, herd health, pasture management, and finance and accounting. "We want interns to understand that a successful cattle operation is about much more than taking care of cattle," said Jenkins. Additionally, Jenkins understands that college students working toward an agricultural degree can bring valuable insights to his operation based on their own experience and education.

A second goal Jenkins has for the interns is for them to recognize the unique opportunities and challenges presented to businesses, which he speaks about often and openly. "The combination of classroom training and frontline experience allows students to gain a more complete understanding of the challenges they will face," according to Jim. Interns get to see the good, the bad, and the ugly of every operation, especially over a three-month internship.

Jenkins tried to make sure Colten experienced all aspects of summer ranch activity. This included rotating cattle through nearly 30 pastures, helping chute side with herd health and monitoring weight gain, checking on salt and minerals, repairing and building fence, and banking tanks and repairing water systems. Learning how to ride and care for horses was also a new experience for Colten, and one he really enjoyed.

When asked what he took away from the internship experience Colten said, "One of the biggest benefits I gained from working with Jim is learning how to be a better grazer." Colten noted the amount of time Jim puts into making grazing decisions; and he could see many of Jim's grazing practices working on his family's operation. He gained insights into how cattle groups can be combined to provide less breeding cost per cow and to achieve a greater harvest efficiency of grass with more even grazing distribution and more recovery time. "I also plan to keep records of each cow's calf crop on our own operation each year," shared Colten. He also saw how using electronic identification to track weight gain and performance will allow him to better manage his herd.