

AgLink



Spring 2004

Linking the MSU College of Agriculture with its Alumni and Friends

College hosts first-ever ag career fair

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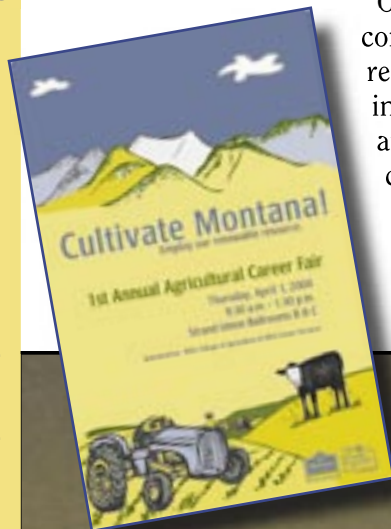
The first annual Cultivate Montana Agricultural Career Fair was held at MSU's Strand Union Building April 1. Both previous graduates of the College of Agriculture and current students were welcome to participate, which was intended to connect them with employers.

Over a dozen companies were represented, ranging from national and statewide companies to federal institutions. MSU Career Services also had pre-fair events

to help students prepare for interviews, including advice on resumes.

"Every employer here is clearly interested in agriculture," said Don Kress, associate dean of the college. "I've seen students arranging interviews with employers for after the fair, so that's good."

"I thought it went very well," said Megan Gibson, a Bozeman native who will graduate in December. "It was nice to see the variety of companies. It would have been nice to see more companies from out of state, but I had an interview with Land O'Lakes (a farmer cooperative headquartered in Minnesota). "Just the experience of doing an interview was good, so I can be more calm the next one I go to. I know more what to expect now."



Chance Nelson of Miles City, an MSU sophomore in Landscape Design, speaks with Dan DeVone of Blanchford Landscape Contractors at the Agricultural Career Fair April 1, 2004 in the SUB ballrooms. Photo by Carol Flaherty, MSU News Services

From the Dean



This time of year is always very special to us in the College of Agriculture as we say goodbye to students we've supported, taught and come to know personally throughout their College years. It's a bit like parenting...we send them out the door with a twinge of anxiety, yet know we've given them everything they need to succeed: from skills for the workforce to practice in decision-making and leadership, as well as friendship.

I truly believe that the MSU College of Agriculture's graduates are among the best-prepared, hardest working young citizens in Montana. They are entrepreneurial, ethical and dedicated to their professions and life ambitions. They have been exposed to the myriad of agricultural issues that we confront today. Besides that, they're just a great group of people. I hope you get to know as many of them as possible.

Employers tell us that they seek MSU graduates because our integrated teaching and research prepare students well for careers. Recruiters tell us that the work ethic of MSU graduates is second-to-none.

Yet, no one will argue that finding jobs in Montana is easy. About two-thirds of our Agriculture grads find work in Montana. Still, that means some young people who want to stay in the "Last Best Place" are forced out-of-state for job opportunities. Maybe they will come back in the future!

I challenge you—our alumni and friends—to do all you can to help these students as they make their way in the world. Participate in next year's career fair (see p. 1) to show our students the world of work. Offer internships like Langohr's Flowerland and scores of other businesses have done (see p. 4). Donate as you are able to our valuable scholarship fund; it truly does make a difference. Tell an MSU graduate how proud you are of him or her. And finally, when the Montana Legislature convenes next spring, tell your legislators that you value higher education. Spread the word that MSU can help the state grow, and that the education of our students is not a financial burden, but an investment in our state's economy.

Have an enjoyable spring, think rain, and please plan to attend one of our research center Field Days this summer, when you can see MSU's land-grant mission in action.

Jeff Jacobsen, Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station

They're excellent!



On Feb. 17, the Alumni Association and Bozeman Area Chamber of Commerce honored 40 MSU seniors with Awards for Excellence. These recognize seniors for academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities and service to MSU and the community. The students, in turn, name the person who has been their most important mentor. College of Agriculture winners and their mentors were: Rebecca Kincaid, Bozeman, (second from left) with Tracy Dougher (far left) of plant sciences and pathology; Matthew Crawford, Rapid City, S.D. (back right) with Mark Quinn of veterinary molecular biology; and Nick Sorenson, Bozeman (front right) beside Rebecca Mattix, veterinary molecular biology. Also pictured is Associate Dean Don Kress at back left.

New selection of Ag clothes available



Show your school spirit with a great selection of clothing from the MSU College of Agriculture. New items include fleece jackets, stadium blankets and windshirts, plus sweatshirts, polos, long- and short-sleeve T's, hoodies and vests in many colors. Special orders and available. Sales support the Ag Student Council. For information, call (406) 994-5744.

MSU projects help reshape Montana's sheep industry

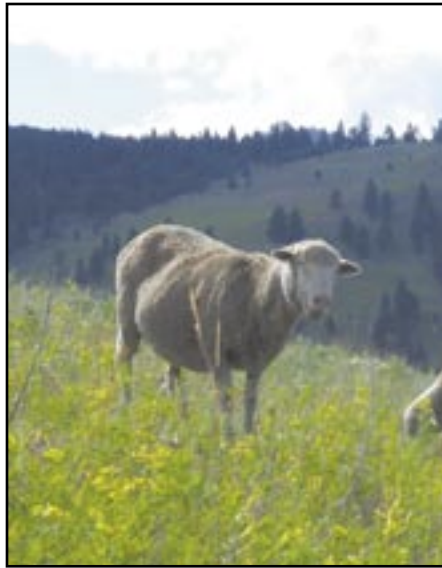
Since the Montana Sheep Drive began almost 15 years ago, with the drive going right down Reed Point's main street, the sheep have entertained thousands of people. The Montana Sheep Drive began in 1989 as a light-hearted response to the Great Montana Centennial Cattle Drive. Now, Montana sheep are provoking smiles for other reasons, too.

"The really bright spot for the sheep industry is the utilization of sheep to manage natural resources, particularly weeds in Montana," said Rodney Kott, MSU Extension Sheep Specialist.

Sheep are normally grown for meat and wool, but they've also become weed warriors. Since sheep naturally prefer weeds over grass, they're recruited for research projects like the one he and Jeff Mosley of MSU started a year ago, Kott said. That project sends sheep around the state to graze noxious weeds. The scientists want to see if sheep can keep weeds like leafy spurge and spotted knapweed from crowding out native plants. Under ideal conditions, 500 to 1,200 ewes and sometimes their lambs graze a research site for five months, Kott said. One sheep can graze about one acre of leafy spurge in one month. Kott has approximately 31 sites in his study.

"The #1 goal is to manipulate natural resources while maintaining a sheep production system that's economically viable," Kott said.

Bob Gilbert of the Montana Wool Growers Association said projects like this are one reason he expects to see more sheep in Montana in 2005. Another is a USDA program that pays producers to hold back their ewe lambs from slaughter. Producers in the past four years have received



A ewe grazes leafy spurge near Missoula in July 2003.

\$18 for each lamb they kept for production.

"I have seen many producers take advantage of that program or would have if it weren't for the drought," Gilbert said. He's also encouraged by the military's interest in wool research and "terrific" advances in wool chemistry, Gilbert said.

Before these developments, reports about the sheep industry were gloomy. Kott said low prices led to a significant drop in the number of breeding sheep in Montana over the past seven years. Sheep are sold on an all-world market without any import restrictions, so producers in Sidney, Mont. have no advantage over producers in Sydney, Australia. Gilbert said volatile markets, predators and urban encroachment are three reasons that Montana has fewer sheep today than when it became a state. Montana had 1,857,000 sheep in 1889, up to six million in the early 20th century and 300,000 now. The last year Montana produced a million sheep was 1972.

'Cats host spring rodeo



MSU rodeo team members Mandy Simonich of Absarokee (upper left), Colter Heckman of Choteau (bottom left), CeeCee Tryan of Helena (upper right) and Lauren Watson of Geysler (bottom right) take a break from setting up for the MSU Spring Rodeo April 8-10. The Bobcat men's team placed second overall (behind Northwest College), and the women took third behind Dawson Community College and the University of Montana-Western. MSU bull rider Travis Burian placed first, as did Blake Knowles in steer wrestling. Watson (above) took first place in barrel racing.

2004 Research Center Field Days

June

- 22 Central Ag Research Center Forage Research & Hay Day, Moccasin

July

- 6 Southern Ag Research Center Field Day, Huntley
- 9 Northwestern Ag Research Center Field Day, Creston
- 13 Eastern Ag Research Center Field Day, Sidney. Coffee and donuts at 8:30 a.m. Tours end at noon with a lunch sponsored by area businesses.
- 14 Central Ag Research Center Grain Tour, Moccasin
- 15 Northern Ag Research Center Field Day, Havre. Registration at 9:30 a.m. Tours end at 3 p.m. Lunch is provided.

August

- 10 Fort Keogh laboratory dedication
- 11 Fort Keogh field day

Seniors say goodbye to the College of Agriculture

Graduation can be a bittersweet time, when thoughts of exciting future opportunities mesh with memories of friendships and college experiences.

Four MSU College of Agriculture seniors paused recently to reflect on their years in Bozeman.

Carey Andersen, a crop science major from **Belgrade**, said, “The whole College of Ag works together very well. It provides a chance for students to be involved in the research.” Andersen also said she believes students who are involved in clubs and activities have stronger ties to their university experience. “College lets you experience so much throughout the years,” she said. Andersen said her lifetime MSU memories include her first Cat/Griz game and a trip to Louisiana with the Ag Student Council.

“I want to do something I love, and use the education I have and the confidence to apply my skills to whatever job I might take.”

—Becky Kossler, Clyde Park

Kacie Killen, an Ag Education major from **Angela**, said her college experience was “fun, exciting and memorable.” She added, “College makes you a well-rounded person. The College of Agriculture is a close-knit group of people.”

Becky Kossler, an AgEd major from **Clyde Park**, said MSU gave her the opportunity to experience several unique adventures, including a trip to Russia to study at Moscow State Ag-Engineering University. “The whole experience of being at MSU, the professors, and having a well-rounded education from the start has led me down the path I’m on now,” she said. “Having a well-rounded education sort of funnels you down the path you want to follow.” She added, “We’re learning from some of the top intellectual minds in our country.”

Dane Dugan, an Ag Extension major from **Stevensville**, said his MSU experience has helped him network with many people around the state. “Montana State University is a premiere college,” he said. Added Dugan, “MSU’s small classes give you more attention and get you more connected with one professor.”

Dugan said he was also grateful to those alumni who support the College of Agriculture. “A college education has become more valuable than ever,” he said. “We’re seeing the benefits of the foundation (MSU graduates) have laid.”

—Reporting by Andrea DeNucci, Rachel Hergett, Shanna Huckins, Carl Lofing and Mary Meyer, all students in AgEd480, “Communicating Agriculture to the Public”



Chance glance leads to blooming job

Gina Burleson said picking a major was as easy as flipping through her course catalog.

“When I was filling out my application for federal aid and had to declare a major, I flipped through the MSU catalog and saw ‘Landscape Design.’ I thought, ‘Oh, that’s cool,’” says the senior from **Melstone** who will finish her degree in December. “I wanted something artistic and I wanted to be outdoors.”

Burleson is adding to expertise gained in the classroom with an internship this spring at Langohr’s Flowerland.

“We pay for their credit hours and can offer them something different to do almost every day,” says Steve Liebmann, owner and manager of Bozeman’s two Langohr’s shops. “We’re your typical small flower shop and greenhouse.” Langohr’s “hasn’t missed a year” since taking on its first MSU intern about 10-12 years ago, and has hired full-time employees from among MSU’s horticulture grads.

If incoming freshmen aren’t as lucky as she was in picking a major, Burleson suggests taking a wide range of classes. She also suggests getting classes in a student’s interest area the first year to see what the field is like.

Other than that, “Always take one fun class each semester so you have a break,” she suggests.

Burleson is also a mentor for a grade school student in Bozeman through the Child Advancement Program.

Ag students help the system work

In some lucky offices at MSU-Bozeman, there are students who are responsible for more, do more and do it better than most people would expect of students.

Two students who do just that for the College of Agriculture are seniors Lexi Newman and Lynmarie Laurens. Newman works in the associate dean's office, while Laurens helps the College's development director and assists Animal and Range Sciences Head Mike Tess with the Steer-A-Year Program.

Newman, of **Columbus**, started in the associate dean's office in 2001. She works closely with Lynn Speakman, the associate dean's administrative assistant. An Animal Science major, Newman says she likes both the work and the people with whom she works.

"Lynn is so gracious. I like the flexibility of the hours and I like being able to have contact with all the kids," Newman says. She will work on the Beartooth Ranch in Australia this summer, extending a connection through the affiliated Beartooth Ranch near Columbus where she has occasionally helped out since her early years in 4-H.

Speakman says that Newman has facilitated MSU's Ag Appreciation Days Silent Auction for the past two years, doing everything from organizing a database to tracking donations to recruiting student volunteers. "That's been her baby for the past two years, and she's done almost everything on it," Speakman says. Newman also has

Lexi Newman of Columbus.

Newman is co-coordinator for Ag Ambassadors, works in the associate dean's office, and helps plan Ag Appreciation Weekend.



been co-coordinator of Ag Ambassadors for two years. Ambassadors travel the region, talking with high school students and answering questions about MSU.

Sandra Germann, the College's development director, glows in a similar way about Laurens.

"I give Lynmarie lots of responsibility, and even with confidential matters I trust her," says Germann. "She's someone I can bounce ideas off of and she can contribute to the work. She's my right hand person, and I'm right-handed."

Tess says Laurens is doing Steer-A-Year work that previously was handled by a staff member. "She is a very responsible young lady with excellent people skills."

Laurens, of **Kalispell**, is an ag business major. Active in planning the state FFA convention as well as doing her MSU jobs, Laurens says she picked ag business "because I love agriculture and understand business. I picked ag business my first year and have never changed my mind about it."

The work ethic and responsibility shown by both students is remarkable, agree staff who work with them.

"Ag students are used to hard work and have strong work ethics," Speakman says. "Those are things I've always thoroughly enjoyed about working with the College of Ag students."

Lynmarie Laurens of Kalispell.

Laurens assists the College's development director and is co-coordinator for the Steer-A-Year program.



Students

College selects ambassadors

New student ambassadors have been chosen for the College of Agriculture. Ag Ambassadors travel Montana and the region to promote awareness of the importance of continuing education as well as career opportunities in agriculture.

New ambassadors are:

- Fritz Baird, **Big Timber**, Ag Business
- Andrew Denman, **Covington, Ga.**, Animal Science
- Clayton Gernaat, **Conrad**, Ag Education
- Nicole Griffin, **Ismay**, Ag Business
- Bryna Hart, **Fromberg**, Pre-Vet - Animal Science
- Larry Hill, **Dillon**, Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Cindy Hogemark, **Springdale**, Range Management
- Karly Krausz, **Lewistown**, Range Management
- Nathan Lofing, **Columbus**, Ag Operations Technology
- Mary Meyer, **Stevensville**, Ag Education
- Melissa Richert, **Big Timber**, Horticulture
- Melissa Stager, **Kenmore, Wash.**, Animal Science
- Halsey Wallace, **Fairfield**, Ag Business
- Jaime Wood, **Sheridan**, Animal Science

It's not too early to think about who will be MSU's Outstanding Agricultural Leaders! They are chosen in September and honored during Agriculture Appreciation Weekend.

See past recipients and an entry form at <http://ag.montana.edu/development/outstanding.htm> or contact Sandra Germann at 994-7671 or sgermann@montana.edu

Research

Size matters in weed suppression

Seed size matters when it comes to wheat, says Weed Scientist Bob Stougaard, of the Northwestern Agricultural Research Center near Kalispell.

Larger wheat seeds produce a more competitive crop and help to suppress wild oats, said Stougaard, who conducted tests at Northwestern and at the Southern Agricultural Research Center at Huntley.

It's logical: plants established from large seeds are more vigorous, meaning initial crop densities are often greater, and the wheat seedlings that emerge from large seed have more tillers, thicker stems, greater leaf area and are taller. All these attributes of improved seedling vigor help to suppress weeds.

"The use of large seeded wheats...could also produce a superior product," said Stougaard. "Flour yields improve as seed size increases and that may provide a marketing advantage for Montana producers."

MSU economists analyze BSE and take research data to students and producers

John Marsh had just finished analyzing spikes in 2003 U.S. beef prices when mad cow disease struck eastern Washington and slammed the door on U.S. beef exports to Japan, South Korea and Mexico.

The MSU economist had already written a report on his findings and sent it to the printer. He indicated that the single case of BSE in Canada (May 2003), along with reduced domestic supplies and strong demand, explained the record beef prices that occurred at all market levels between the falls of 2002 and 2003.

But when mad cow disease was reported Dec. 23, 2003 in eastern Washington, Marsh's report was already completed. He added a section on BSE, and within three weeks, Marsh's "Briefing #63 on "U.S. Beef Price Dynamics in 2003" was available to decision makers throughout Montana, the Northern Plains and the Rockies.

At the same time, Marsh and fellow MSU economist Gary Brester were incorporating mad cow disease into their classrooms. Marsh teaches advanced marketing in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics. Brester teaches two undergraduate courses in agricultural business management. Both are researchers, too, for the Agricultural Marketing Policy Center at MSU. The center was created three years ago by the Montana University System Regents to offer objective analysis for informed decision making.

"Research and teaching are complementary products," Brester said. "Because of that research, you are able to visit and teach students about current events from a scientific perspective, something besides just opinions. It helps students understand

the importance of understanding economic fundamentals and principles."

Marsh, Brester and other MSU researchers who analyze issues for the Agricultural Marketing Policy Center regularly take information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Livestock Marketing Information Center in Denver and use it to create statistical models. They employ those models to look at agricultural issues like food safety, cattle identification systems and Country of Origin Labeling. Their findings are sent out as briefings from the Agricultural Marketing Policy Center.

"Once a person understands the fundamentals of the market, these kinds of things can be considered by those modeling strategies," Brester said.

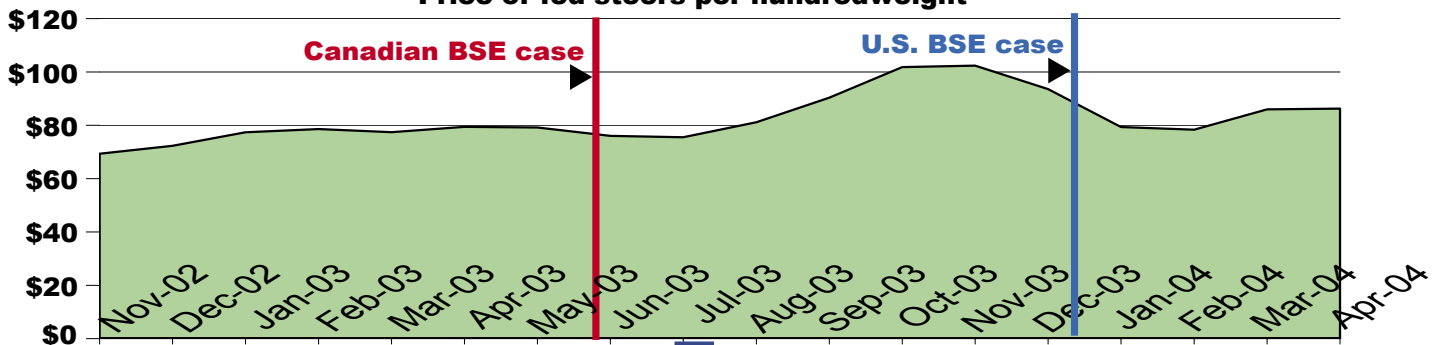
Marsh said he had to examine several factors after mad cow disease surfaced in the area where he grew up and where his brother and cousin still ranch. Two main things were the effects on domestic demand and foreign trade.

Consumers in the U.S. kept eating beef, Marsh said. However, Mexico, South Korea and Japan—three of the four major importers of U.S. beef—closed their borders to U.S. beef. Canada kept its border open, but demand was down.

Since then, cattle markets have been returning, and cattle prices are rising, Marsh said. Mexico now buys beef and beef by-products under certain restrictions.

MSU isn't the only university doing these kinds of analyses, Marsh said. Universities in other regions of the U.S. do them, too. But MSU is among the leaders in the western United States, he said.

Price of fed steers per hundredweight



Businesses, producers step up for MSU Animal BioSciences Facility and MAES

Montana Livestock Ag Credit, Inc. has pledged \$250,000 toward a new Animal BioSciences Facility at MSU-Bozeman, Northwest Farm Credit Services has pledged \$200,000 toward it, and sugar beet growers in south-central Montana are dedicating a percentage of their crop toward the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station's Million Dollar Match campaign.

Both the building and match are top priorities for MSU and the Experiment Station.

Planning is in the early stages for the Animal BioSciences Facility, which will house specialized classrooms for range science, information technology, genetics and physiology; facilities for delivering educational programs to on- and off-campus learners; and modern research labs. The Million Dollar Match campaign seeks to raise \$1 million for repairs and renovations

to the state's agricultural research stations. The money will be matched by the state. To date \$687,000 has been received or pledged.

"We're proud to make this commitment to statewide agriculture," said the Montana Livestock Ag Credit president Tim Gill.

"We are pleased to become a major sponsor of this project," said Farm Credit's Board Chair Gary Smith, a dairyman from Sequim, Wash.

The Mountain States Beet Growers and Big Horn County Sugar Beet Growers Associations pledge is expected to raise \$40,000 over three years.

"We see the importance of a functioning experiment station," said Greg Lackman, president of Mountain States Beet Growers Association.

"These donations are tremendously important to the future of the College and the Experiment Station," said Jeff Jacobsen, MSU College of Agriculture interim dean.

Mike Frisina to receive honorary doctorate degree at MSU graduation

Mike Frisina, who received his B.S. '72, and M.S. '74 from MSU in Fish and Wildlife Management, will receive an honorary doctorate degree at this year's commencement.

Frisina has had a long and distinguished career with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Some of the most public projects have included the establishment of collaborative grazing plans among ranchers and Game Management Areas in the state.

Frisina has worked extensively overseas, and is internationally known for his work in big game and habitat management. He has collaborated on several graduate student thesis projects at MSU. Recently,

he was instrumental in helping establish the August "Gus" Hormay Range Scholarship and in bringing the Hormay Range Collection to the MSU libraries.



Mike (left) and Margaret Frisina conducting wild sheep population and range surveys in the Altai Mountains of Mongolia.

On May 8, two hundred MSU College of Agriculture graduates are set to receive their diplomas. Sen. Conrad Burns is scheduled to address the COA Class of 2004. Also



Sandra Germann, Development Director

on campus will be 40-, 50- and 60-year reunion classes taking part in many exciting activities with their classmates, including taking that "once again" walk across the stage.

We must also think ahead to Fall, when new and returning students will arrive to pursue that college graduation quest. Many will receive scholarships to help make their dreams a reality. Associate Dean Don Kress said more than 200 agriculture students have been offered scholarships totaling over \$250,000. These scholarships are given by the COA, its departments, and the University. All college and department scholarships are supported by generous donations from individuals and organizations that support agriculture.

All students with a 3.5 GPA or better received scholarships this year. Some scholarships went to students with lower GPA's due to other criteria established by the donor. But lest we think our work is done, I was alarmed to learn that many outstanding students with a GPA of 3.0-3.49 did not receive scholarships because there wasn't enough money. If you would like information on setting up a scholarship with your own criteria, I would love to visit with you.

Have a wonderful spring and summer and let me know how I can help. Sincerely,

Sandra L. Germann

**Class of '89 (BS),
'91 (MS) AgEd/Extension**

Northern Ag Research Center heads to the future

Gregg Carlson, tapped a year ago as interim superintendent of the Northern Agricultural Research Center at Havre, is now its permanent superintendent.



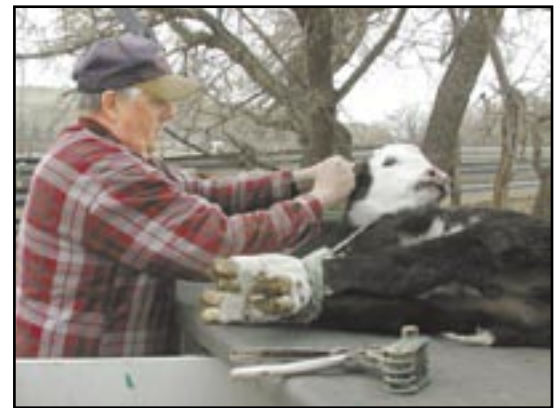
Gregg Carlson

“We’re at the beginning of a lot of things,” says Carlson. That includes hiring a precision agriculture researcher, taking livestock breeding in new directions while continuing livestock behavior research, continuing innovative livestock nutrition research, and adding oilseed crops to the traditional dryland cereal crop work done both on- and off-station in four counties.

Carlson said the station’s inbred line of cattle has yielded unique insights into breeding but does not reflect the cattle now raised by ranchers. Part of the new research will aim at increasing calf weaning weight without increasing mature cow size.

“A bigger cow needs more grass, so we have to be concerned with the mature size of the animals,” Carlson said. This research builds on earlier work at NARC with crossbred cattle for matching “cow type” to range conditions. The livestock behavioral research is showing how to use range resources more evenly.

Donations will make possible the addition of an equipment building, hopefully this year.



Steve Lairy, a NARC ranch hand, tags a less-than-day-old calf March 31.

“This is an applied research facility with an amazing range of programs and people. We’ve got 7,000 acres. It’s increasingly rare to have real-world facilities to do the research we can with cattle. Many places only use labs and computer models to do animal research,” Carlson said.

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