2011

PFIZER ANIMAL HEALTH
BOVINE EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM REVIEW
Thank you for participating in the Pfizer Animal Health 2011 Bovine Externship Program. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort you devoted to mentoring a veterinary student at your practice.

By working side by side with your student, and sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for the cattle industry, you’ve provided your extern with an invaluable learning experience. The opportunity to work with exceptional veterinary role models like you is what makes the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship Program one of the most highly sought-after externships among veterinary students today.

In gratitude for your participation, we’re pleased to provide you with this 2011 program review. The pages include a brief synopsis by most of the 82 participating students, including what they appreciated most about the externship and how the experience impacted their plans to work in food-animal practice.

It is our hope that the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship Program ultimately will increase the number of students who pursue food-animal practice after graduation. Thank you for making this year’s program a success.

Sincerely,
Dr. Doug Braun
Veterinary Segment Manager; Extern Coordinator
Dr. Mike Nichols
Sr. Veterinarian, Beef Cattle Tech Services; Extern Coordinator
Dr. Bradley Mills
Sr. Veterinarian, Dairy Cattle Tech Services; Extern Coordinator
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BOVINE EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Because food-animal veterinarians are of critical importance to the cattle industry, Pfizer Animal Health is proud to sponsor the Bovine Externship Program. This initiative is designed to provide veterinary students with experience in cattle veterinary practice and encourage their interest and commitment to practicing in the cattle industry.

HIGHLIGHTS:

• In 2011, 82 first- and second-year students from veterinary schools across the country participated.
• Students were selected based on their applications and recommendations from their university faculty adviser.
• No previous exposure to cattle practice was required, but students had to be willing to consider cattle practice as a potential career path.
• Students spent four weeks during the summer working with cattle veterinarians at their practices or at cattle operations.
• Pfizer Animal Health provided a stipend of $2,000 to each student to offset travel, lodging and other expenses.
• 350+ veterinary students have participated in the program since its inception in 2009.

The Bovine Externship Program is a component of Pfizer Animal Health’s Commitment to Veterinarians™ platform, which offers support through training and education, research and development, investing in the future of the veterinary profession, and philanthropy.
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My Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship was a very rewarding experience.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

Previous to this, I had very little experience with bovine practice, and it was something I wanted to see before focusing on food-animal medicine as a career.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

The thing I liked the most about food-animal practice was the variety of things I was able to see in any given day.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Food-animal medicine is very likely the area of veterinary medicine I will be practicing in after graduation. Thank you to Pfizer Animal Health for your generosity in allowing me to spend a portion of my summer learning about food-animal medicine in the Midwest.
Was this a valuable experience?
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Was this a valuable experience?
I had an AWESOME experience during my externship. It was extremely valuable as I had zero prior hands-on experience with large animal up until that point. In addition to having no hands-on large-animal experience, I also had little large-animal academic material other than anatomy covered in my veterinary school curriculum at the start of the externship.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
At Tuskegee, we start our large-animal medicine classes junior year. Participating in the externship prepared me for my large-animal medicine courses as well as prepared me to work with large animals, both equine and bovine, in clinics. It was very important for me to get exposed to cattle because I had not yet explored the possibility of working with bovine.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked most working with bovine was the close client-doctor relationship that the veterinarians hold with the head of the bovine operations. The clients really trust the veterinarian’s professional ability and opinion in matters related to the health of their cattle.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After my externship experience, I will most definitely consider working with cattle as a career option.

Jessica Bailey
Tuskegee University
Logan County Animal Clinic

Richard Blake
University of Tennessee
Hartland Animal Hospital

Was this a valuable experience?
This opportunity to participate in the externship was a very valuable experience for my future career.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Although, I grew up on a dairy farm, it was pertinent that I get as much exposure as possible. When the possibility arose that I could work with large numbers of cattle, I gladly accepted this opportunity. In all, this was a great experience for me. I got to participate in a number of surgeries, perform palpation on approximately 150 cows every Friday, and gained more experience with patient care.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
Probably the best aspect about cattle practice that I liked was assisting the producer generate healthier and more profitable cattle.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I am definitely considering practicing with cattle after graduation.
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Was this a valuable experience?
I found this to be a very valuable experience as I was able to spend four weeks with a veterinarian in my field of interest and not only observe but actively participate in procedures and case calls. I learned about business practices, different procedures and ways of doing those procedures, and I was able to network with fellow veterinarians and producers in that area. It provided insight for me as to whether I would like to continue on my path to dairy medicine or if I’d like to learn more about beef medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
For me, exposure to the cattle themselves was not that important as I work with them on a daily basis, but the exposure to the veterinary side of cattle was invaluable. I am aware of the daily care but was unaware what all was involved with dairy cattle medicine and operating a dairy cattle practice. Being able to see and learn about that will give me a better idea of what I may expect in the future if I choose to go that route.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I really enjoyed the cattle themselves. Dairy cattle are so calm and easy to work with. Well, most of the time anyway. I also liked the clientele that you work with. They are very practical people but also care deeply about their animals and want the best care for them. The consistency of work that you get with dairy cattle practice was also a nice surprise. With weekly, biweekly or monthly herd checks, there is never a “dry” season that often occurs with strictly beef cattle medicine.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I will absolutely consider cattle medicine as a career option. I would like to still practice dairy medicine because I really did enjoy it, but I don’t think I could do strictly dairy because of the repetitiveness. I would like to incorporate more food animals into the practice and maybe do a split beef and dairy practice instead. I guess we’ll see where I end up when I get out.

Was this a valuable experience?
This was an extremely valuable experience for me! I got so much hands-on bovine experience through this externship. Coming into this, I had nearly no experience with bovine practice, particularly in dairy. Now, I feel pretty well-rounded in many aspects of bovine practice, including common surgeries (DA and C-sections), calving calls, palpation and ultrasound, general herd health, as well as milk quality, parlor and pen assessments.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
For me, it was very important to be exposed to bovine medicine. I didn’t realize how much I was going to enjoy nearly every aspect of bovine practice. Not only did I enjoy working with the cattle, but I really enjoyed the interactions with many different types of dairymen, farmers and farmhands.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed the variety that bovine medicine can provide. My favorite part during this externship was the many calving calls that we went on. We just had our OB lectures and labs last semester, and I was able to apply everything that I learned in them on these calls. Each call presented a unique challenge, and I was excited to work through each of them and end up with a healthy cow and calf in the end (at least, in most cases).

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I absolutely will! This externship really got me excited about working in a mixed-animal practice in a rural community. I enjoyed the dynamics with the clients and greatly appreciated the variety in bovine medicine.
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AMANDA BOWERS  
University of Missouri

Whetstone Veterinary Service,  
Lee’s Summit Animal Hospital

Was this a valuable experience?  
This was a valuable experience for my education and reaffirmed that I want to pursue a veterinary career in large-animal medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?  
My primary interest in veterinary medicine is large-animal and production medicine. I have always been curious about the herd health aspect of veterinary medicine, and this gave me the opportunity to seek out more experience and get exposure in this field.

What did you like most about cattle practice?  
What I liked most about cattle practice is the atmosphere of the people you work with, the physical and mental challenges that you face every day and that every day brings something new and exciting.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?  
Yes, this externship program helped reassure that large-animal medicine is the career path that I want to pursue.

BRETT BOYUM  
University of Minnesota

Countryside Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?  
The Bovine Externship Program provided by Pfizer Animal Health and the Countryside Veterinary Clinic of Lowville, N.Y., was an invaluable experience.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?  
Though I grew up on a dairy farm and most of my veterinary experience has been with dairy cattle, I still learned a tremendous amount by participating in this externship. The four-week experience with the Countryside clinic allowed me to have first-hand interaction with dairy cattle producers in a different region of the country. Although the dairy industry operates at a national and international level, I was able to appreciate some of the regional differences and challenges the Northeast producers were facing. This experience furthered my experience with palpation, medical procedures, treatments, vaccinations and so much more.

What did you like most about cattle practice?  
I enjoy cattle practice because of the immense variety in any typical day (or night on call). There were multiple days throughout the experience that I would get home and say, “Wow, that day flew by!” The typical day would be filled with herd health checks, sick cows, research trials and farm advisory meetings. All of these things kept the days interesting and made time fly. A couple of the highlights were deflating a LDA and feeling confident pregnancy checking down to 35 days. I also enjoyed working with the various producers who operated farms ranging from 30 to 4,000 cows. This variation kept every client visit interesting because every farm had different goals and objectives.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?  
This experience confirmed my intent to pursue a career in dairy cattle practice and left me wanting to explore more opportunities in dairy cattle medicine.
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Was this a valuable experience?
This externship allowed me to gain great insight into the dairy industry of north-central Florida, where I hope to practice, and improve my clinical skills related to food-animal medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Having four uninterrupted weeks to spend improving my skills working with cattle clinically and non-clinically was extremely important to me, both in confirming my ambitions to be a food-animal veterinarian and in gaining comfort and experience working with cattle.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I loved being outside all day, and I loved doing physical work all day long. It felt great to feel like I put in a hard day’s work both with my body and with my brain every day, and to feel like I earned my night’s sleep every night.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Absolutely. I have thought for several years that food-animal medicine, particularly cattle practice, was the field for me, and every experience I’ve had related to it has confirmed that idea. Having four weeks to work in a cattle practice was the most confirmatory experience thus far. It was everything I hoped it would be, and I hope one day I can work in a similar type of practice environment.

CASSANDRA BROWN
University of Florida

Matt Peterson, DMV

Was this a valuable experience?
My externship this summer was an extremely valuable experience.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was an excellent opportunity to get more exposure to cattle and the cattle industry. During my externship, I did a variety of procedures with cattle. Some things that I got to perform were: transrectal ultrasounds, transrectal palpations, breeding soundness exams in bulls, Trichomonas foetus test sample collections, castrations, vaccinations, feet work, vaginal prolapse repair and dehornings.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
My favorite thing about cattle practice is the opportunity that you get to work with your clients about management and ways to increase their profitability. One particular way that I am the most interested in is the use of artificial insemination to increase the genetic potential in small and large herds of beef cattle. I was exposed to a lot of reproductive work in beef cattle while on my externship and definitely hope to work with beef cattle reproduction once I get out of school.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
This experience solidified the fact that I want to go into cattle practice after completing school. I really enjoy working with cattle and their owners. I really appreciate the opportunity that I was given this summer and enjoyed it enough that I stayed longer than the four weeks that I had originally planned to stay for.

BRETT BUCHANAN
University of Missouri

Barry County Veterinary Service

It felt great to feel like I put in a hard day’s work both with my body and with my brain every day, and to feel like I earned my night’s sleep every night.

This experience solidified the fact that I want to go into cattle practice after completing school.
Was this a valuable experience?
This was an incredibly valuable experience for me. I am a vet student who is interested in practicing food-animal medicine but does not have much experience in the food animal industry. This externship allowed me to gain great insight into the dairy industry of north-central Florida, where I hope to practice, and improve my clinical skills related to food-animal medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
I have been trying to gain as much cattle experience as possible throughout my undergraduate and master’s studies. It is difficult, however, to find ways to gain experience without having much prior experience and while trying to maintain a school schedule. Therefore, having four uninterrupted weeks to spend improving my skills working with cattle clinically and non-clinically was extremely important to me, both in confirming my ambitions to be a food-animal veterinarian and in gaining comfort and experience working with cattle.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I loved being outside all day, and I loved doing physical work all day long. It felt great to feel like I put in a hard day’s work both with my body and with my brain every day, and to feel like I earned my night’s sleep every night. I also enjoyed the spontaneous nature of cattle practice. Palpating was pretty much a given every morning, but I liked not knowing what kind of emergencies were going to come up to fill the rest of the day.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Absolutely. I have thought for several years that food-animal medicine, particularly cattle practice, was the field for me, and every experience I’ve had related to it has confirmed that idea. Having four weeks to work in a cattle practice was the most confirmatory experience thus far. It was everything I hoped it would be, and I hope one day I can work in a similar type of practice environment.
My four-week externship spanning from June 6 to July 1 at DeWitt Veterinary Clinic was an excellent educational and networking experience. DeWitt is located in a part of Iowa that I had never been to before, and the externship was an excellent opportunity to learn valuable information about the dairy and beef production systems in that region of Iowa.

Talking with various farmers and hearing about their operations was one of the experiences that I enjoyed the most about the externship. It was interesting to learn about the daily activities and management protocols on the different farms and to what extent a veterinarian is integrated into each production system.

While there, I was given the opportunity to spend time with each of the four veterinarians that practice bovine medicine. All of them were great individuals, and from each, I acquired valuable knowledge about the services a bovine veterinarian provides to his and or her client. It was good to see the variety and learn about each of the veterinarians’ different styles of communication with clients and how they approached their work. I was able to spend a considerable amount of time working with both dairy and beef cattle.

The names of the veterinarians that I spent time going to dairy farms were Dr. Mike Bossom and Dr. Brent Volker. The trips to the dairy farms were primarily for herd health checks focusing on assessing reproductive efficiency within the herd. Both Dr. Bossom and Dr. Volker were excellent people to learn from about rectal palpation of the bovine reproductive tract and did a great job of explaining how it should be done and what should be felt on ultrasound at the different stages of pregnancy. When the opportunity arose on a farm, I was allowed to palpate cows that were confirmed by the veterinarian to not be pregnant, give 90- and 125-day pregnancy rechecks and dry off pregnancy rechecks. Also, I was able to learn about different reproductive synchronization protocols and what the benefits may be for utilizing a certain one on a particular dairy farm. As far as communication with the dairy producers, I was able to learn what type of questions a veterinarian should ask in several situations, including problematic diarrhea in cows or calves, a dystocia, a cow that the farmer suspects has a displaced abomasum and issues with metritis in fresh cow pens. Other common aspects of communication I was able to observe included discussing with the dairy farmer methods to improve the reproductive efficiency of their herd, sick cow/calf treatment protocols, dairy management software questions, and disease preventative strategies including vaccination. As far as surgical procedures on dairy cows, I was able to witness eight left displaced abomasums surgeries was a right parametrical omentectomy. Examples of other technical skills I was given included the opportunity to perform with dairy cattle include intravenous administration of a medication, correction of a mild dystocia, physical exams under the supervision of the veterinarian, assisting with the necropsy of a dead cow and two dead calves, and assisting with preparation of tissues for submission to the diagnostic lab.

The names of the veterinarians I spent time working with beef cattle were Dr. Phil Reemtsma and Dr. Jessica Bates. While working with beef cattle I primarily witnessed and assisted with bull fertility testing and embryo transfer work. The bull fertility testing that I saw was done at either the haul-in facility at the DeWitt clinic or at the Wyoming satellite clinic. The embryo transfer work was conducted by Dr. Reemtsma either at the customer’s farm or the clinic. I had never seen embryo transfer work before, so it was an excellent and interesting opportunity. I was able to observe the whole process of flushing a cow for embryos, assessing the embryos for quality under a microscope, the process of preserving the embryos for storage in a liquid nitrogen tank, and placing an embryo whether fresh or frozen in a recipient cow. Surgical procedures I was able to see performed in with processing beef cattle at either the farm or the haul-in facility. The procedures done at the producers request consisted of administration of vaccinations and a pour-on parasiticide, castration of bull calves, placing ear tags or fly tags, dehorning and putting in vaccines, and assisted with preparation of tissues for submission to the diagnostic lab.

I was afforded at the DeWitt Veterinary Clinic. It was an experience that I will never forget. I am very thankful for the opportunity I was afforded at the DeWitt Veterinary Clinic, was an excellent educational and networking experience. Pfizer Animal Health 2011 Bovine Externship Program Review
My four-week externship spanning from June 6 to July 1 at DeWitt Veterinary Clinic was an excellent educational and networking experience. DeWitt is located in a part of Iowa that I had never been to before, and the externship was an excellent opportunity to learn valuable information about the dairy and beef production systems in that region of Iowa. Talking with various farmers and hearing about their operations was one of the experiences that I enjoyed the most about the externship. It was interesting to learn about the daily activities and management protocols on the different farms and to what extent a veterinarian is integrated into each production system.

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I am very thankful for the opportunity I was afforded at the DeWitt Veterinary Clinic. It was an experience that I will never forget.
My experience at Canton Veterinary Clinic was extremely valuable. Dr. Goehl, his wife and the entire staff were great to work with and wonderful teachers. I spent a considerable amount of time discussing cattle medical and management practices. It is always a benefit for me to discuss with different veterinarians what practices they have been implementing and the things in particular work in their areas and situations. Dr. Dr. Goehl was wonderful about taking time to talk about and show me different practices on both the medical and management side of things. While there, cases ranged from small cow/calf producers needing regular vaccinations and pinkeye treatments, larger cow/calf producers getting 100+ ultrasounded, as well as stocker operations. I was exposed to a wide variety of cases and operations. Dr. Dr. Goehl also took time to go over some of his business management practices and record-keeping. It was extremely beneficial to learn about the business aspect of running a successful large-animal practice.

I definitely want to pursue a career in food-animal medicine (cattle in particular). This was a wonderful experience and definitely encouraged me to continue pursuing food-animal medicine as a career path.

Was this a valuable experience?
The externship experience was immeasurably valuable. There is no better way to help determine whether bovine medicine is a career path of interest than spending quality time with a variety of bovine veterinarians. I believe that for even those students that choose to not work with cattle in their careers this experience provides exposure to industries (beef and dairy) that a veterinarian may be asked to give opinions on to future clients.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
The ability to have hands-on participation in the daily events was essential to really understanding what a bovine practitioner does. This was especially true for palpation. Also, I believe that gaining confidence and experience working with cattle makes the experience more valuable by solidifying many of the concepts that students learn in a lecture setting.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed working closely with the many employees at both the dairies and feedlots. I respected the camaraderie and teamwork that required both operations to run smoothly. Additionally, I enjoyed knowing that the work I was performing was providing safe, affordable and consistent food for communities across America. The work I did went further than simply treating an illness in an individual animal.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I will definitely want cattle practice to be at least part of my career.
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ANGIE CLARK
Mississippi State University

Canton Veterinary Clinic

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Was this a valuable experience?
I would not trade this experience for a million dollars! It was wonderful. I learned so much in the short time I was there, and I definitely want to go back. We were so very busy for the four weeks I was there, so I was exposed to cattle about 12 hours a day, five days a week, and half a day on Saturday. It was really important to me to be with someone who didn’t mind explaining things and teaching me along the way. Dr. Vance was absolutely wonderful! I wouldn’t have wanted to be anywhere else.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I loved being outside and being busy. I loved, really, everything about it.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After this experience, I definitely am considering cattle practice as a career option. I really appreciate the opportunity to go and experience this. Thank you, again!!!

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Was this a valuable experience?
The Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship Program was an extremely valuable experience. I split my externship time between Hitch Enterprises, a feedlot in Guymon, Okla., and Elgin Veterinary Hospital, a food-animal referral practice in Elgin, Texas.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
I was exposed to aspects of the cattle industry that I have never experienced before. This opportunity was very important to me, especially the feedlot experience, since that is not something I am able to experience firsthand in the Southeast or in my veterinary school curriculum. On the feedlot, I learned about population medicine, vaccine management programs and cattle handling systems. Dr. Blood took so much time to explain the principles of feedlot medicine to me and answered my endless questions. He also provided me with hands-on experience in necropsy and surgery. I also was fortunate to be at Hitch while Dr. Tom Noffsinger presented a seminar on low-stress cattle handling. The second part of the externship at Elgin was also a great learning experience. Days at Elgin were filled with bucking bulls and show cattle, and I loved it. I have never had any experience with bucking bulls or rodeo in general. This opened my eyes to a whole new world, and I now have a new respect for bucking bulls as performance animals and athletes. There were some great cases in the hospital while I was there. I got to see some amazing surgeries that I could only see in practice like Dr. Warner’s. I learned that facilities are very important with this line of work. Hydraulic chutes, tilt tables and good help are vital for a successful cattle practice performing advanced procedures. I also learned a lot about lameness, joint injections, surgical dehorning and obstetrics.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
Overall my favorite part of cattle practice from both experiences combined is getting to work with an industry and species I love. Food-animal practice gives me a sense of pride knowing that my work is directly contributing to the U.S. food supply and economy.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After my experiences this past summer, I will most definitely consider a career in bovine medicine. My experiences through the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship helped me realize I am more interested in bucking bull work as well as show cattle.
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AIMEE DANIEL
Mississippi State University
Hartland Animal Hospital

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ANNA DANIEL
Auburn University
Hitch Enterprises, Elgin Veterinary Hospital
A few days after I came down to Alabama, I traveled to Arkansas to observe carcass ultrasound on the bulls they send over for superovulation in preparation for breeding. When we performed the ultrasound, they were long yearlings. Four measurements are taken during a carcass ultrasound: ribeye area, backfat, intramuscular fat (marbling) and rump fat. The ribeye area is taken between the 12th and 13th rib, and four images have to be taken of the intramuscular fat to ensure accuracy. Carcass ultrasound has become a standard when selling bulls so that clients have a better idea of the traits of the bulls they purchase.

I met with Dr. Scruggs from Pfizer Animal Health about halfway through my time at Cow Creek Ranch. He gave me some very useful advice to help me get the most out of my experience there and in the future. He told me to pay attention to what is around me because that is the best way to learn. Those students that stand back and observe get more out of the experience than those that constantly ask questions and do not pay attention to what is going on around them. He said when you are observing, think about what you would do and how you would perform the procedure or treat the animal. By going through the process in your own mind, you learn more and get more out of the experience.

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By working alongside Dr. Perry when we went on calls, I was able to learn from her in more ways than just the veterinary aspect. She was a good role model for me as a woman large-animal veterinarian, and I watched how she interacted with various clients and earned their respect when working cattle. I took many things away from her and plan on using them in my future as a food-animal veterinarian as well.

Overall, my experience at Cow Creek Ranch and Greensboro Veterinary Clinic was a very fulfilling and valuable opportunity that opened my eyes to the world around me by living in a rural community for a month and working with many different people. I have learned a great deal about the cattle industry, veterinary practices and what it is like to live in a rural environment during my stay in Alabama. What I liked most about cattle practice was the constantly changing environment and the different types of people and animals on the various calls. It offers a unique challenge and also helped me improve my skills in communication and learning to adapt to new environments. Not every call is the same, and that is what I love about cattle practice. I’m always learning something new, whether it relates directly to veterinary medicine or not. What I liked least about cattle practice was feeling like I did not know as much as the producers. For most of these producers, cattle are their livelihood, and therefore, they know a great deal about these animals. Sometimes I felt like I was not qualified enough to be giving them advice when they know more than I do in many aspects of the cattle industry. This is why it was a very valuable and important opportunity for me to get more exposed to cattle by not only working with them in a veterinary practice but also living on a ranch and helping out with the daily chores. I learned a lot about the day-to-day operation of a cattle operation by living on Cow Creek Ranch for a month, and it was a great addition to going out on calls with the veterinarians in Greensboro. This experience has heightened my desire to become involved in cattle practice when I graduate. I have learned a great deal about cattle veterinary medicine and also about cattle operations in general, both of which will help me succeed in the future as a food-animal veterinarian.
After I received the Pfizer Animal Health externship, I began to look for veterinary practices to work with over the summer, but I had little success in finding an opening. I was talking with my Great Uncle one day about the situation, and he informed me that he bought a bull from Cow Creek Ranch in Aliceville, Ala. He told me that it would be a good fit for me and that I would learn a lot down there. My Great Uncle was right. Not only did I learn more about the cattle industry, I learned more about what it is like to live in a rural community and how to adapt to the changes in association with it.

I began my stay at Cow Creek Ranch with a tour of the ranch and learned about the cattle in general and the different types of grasses they have in the area. During the time I stayed on the ranch, I learned how to herd cattle on horseback. I had never ridden a horse before, so that was an exciting learning experience. We worked cow/calf pairs on the ranch one day. We put fly medicine on the cows and vaccinated the calves. My last week on the ranch, we placed OIDs in the embryo donor cows and began a series of FSII shots to allow the cows to superovulate in preparation for breeding. A few days after I came down to Alabama, I traveled to Arkansas to observe carcass ultrasounding on the bulls they send over there after weaning. When we performed the ultrasounds, they were long yearlings. Four measurements are taken during a carcass ultrasound: ribeye area, backfat, intramuscular fat (marbling) and rump fat. The ribeye area is taken between the 12th and 13th rib, and four images have to be taken of the intramuscular fat to ensure accuracy. Carcass ultrasound has become a standard when selling bulls so that clients have a better idea of the traits of the bulls they purchase.

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I began to travel to Greensboro Veterinary Clinic the second week of my stay to gain more veterinary experience with cattle. I met with Dr. Payne when I arrived, and he showed me his cattle operation of about 60 head. He described to me his method of handling cattle that he encourages everyone to adopt because it makes the cattle less stressed and easier to handle. He says that one should approach the cattle from where you want them to go. He uses his body language instead of his voice or objects to move the cattle, which results in the cattle and the people working them being less stressed.

The first call I went on was with Dr. Lena Perry to a mixed breed herd of cattle from the stockyard. After the cattle were gathered, we collected ear notches from every cow, call and bull to test for bovine viral diarrhea. The ear notches are tested for the viral RNA or viral antigen to detect if an animal has BVD. The infection is readily passed among cattle, and calves infected during gestation are carriers for life, which has a negative impact on the herd as well.

The next day I began to pregnancy check cows for the first time. I have palpated open cows at school, and some cows in late gestation before, but not beyond that. I began to get a feel for the fluid in the uterus and the placentomes at four months of gestation. This particular herd had an active infection of trichomoniasis, and in some cows that had the infection, we could palpate for pyometra. We also tested the bulls for trichomoniasis by doing a prepuital scraping and placing it in pouches to be sent to the lab for testing. This infection is detrimental to a herd because it leads to repeat abortions, and if the infected cow does have a calf, that calf is a carrier as well.

I continued to travel to Greensboro Veterinary Clinic and was able to practice more pregnancy checks with Dr. Perry and Dr. Payne. I was able to palpate many mixed breeds as well as pure Angus cattle, which exposed me to much variation among cattle during palpation. Angus cattle have smaller cervixes than Brahman or Holstein, which can make it more difficult. During my time at the vet clinic, I also processed many calves. Typically we would vaccinate, deworm, tag them and castrate the bull calves. I learned from Dr. Perry how to castrate the bull calves. When I did it for the first time, I discovered that it can be more difficult than it looks. By working alongside Dr. Perry when we went on calls, I was able to learn from her in more ways than just the veterinary aspect. She was a good role model for me as a woman large-animal veterinarian, and I watched how she interacted with various clients and earned their respect when working cattle. I took many things away from her and plan on using them in my future as a food-animal veterinarian as well.

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Brandon Gates
Colorado State University

Was this a valuable experience?
Yes, this was most definitely a valuable experience. Any experience working with and handling animals is a valuable experience due to spending our first two years predominately in the classroom.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important to me to gain exposure working with beef cattle in a veterinary medicine setting. This experience also opened doors for me to gain more experience later on.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I really enjoy working with the bovine species in general. I also prefer to work outdoors and can easily relate to cattle producers and ranchers. I enjoy their work ethic and admire their way of life. I also enjoy the variety that cattle practice provides because small-animal medicine can sometimes be very redundant and routine.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Most definitely. Overall, I think the positives definitely outweigh the negatives.

Megan Gorden
Colorado State University

Was this a valuable experience?
This summer was definitely a unique experience for me. Before May, I hadn’t visited very many farms, and my veterinary experiences were pretty limited to small-animal exposures. That all changed on my first day on a dairy as two things stand out in my mind: I ended up in manure so deep it sucked off my over-boots, and I palpated more than 50 cows my first day. I found both situations to be quite comical (as did the vet I was working with). I quickly learned how to keep my boots on, and also what palpating a pregnant cow felt like. I wouldn’t give up either extremely valuable experience.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
The exposure to cattle was very important to me. I am very much a “hands-on” learner, and I need to actually perform procedures, rather than just read about them in a book in vet school. For instance, learning about an LDA in class was interesting but rather mundane, as I never thought I would be dealing with one. This summer, I ended up doing four LDA surgeries and helping with a C-section, dehorning, calving, branding, TB tests and many other things I had never experienced before. This exposure made it interesting and fun, and I believe I learned lessons that will stay with me forever.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
Cattle practice is obviously much different than the small-animal practice I am used to. I loved working outside, even in the 90-degree heat. I liked how much of the veterinary care we did involved herd management and group health. I liked that there is less reliance on testing for disease (i.e., CBC/chemistry) and more use of really good physical exam skills and observations. I also liked working with baby calves.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After this experience, I will definitely consider cattle practice as an option. In fact, I went into vet school planning to do small-animal practice. Because of my experiences this summer, I’ve decided to do a general track for my clinical rotation. While I don’t want to give up working with cats and dogs right now, I also am eager to learn more about food-animal medicine and continue gaining experiences in that area of veterinary medicine. I am very grateful for the externship opportunity in which I was allowed to participate.
Brandon Gates
Colorado State University

CSURF Maxwell Ranch, Dawson County Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
Yes, this was most definitely a valuable experience. Any experience working with and handling animals is a valuable experience due to spending our first two years predominately in the classroom.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important to me to gain exposure working with beef cattle in a veterinary medicine setting. This experience also opened doors for me to gain more experience later on.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
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My externship was a very valuable experience during my veterinary education. With the amount of lecture-based learning involved in the first three years of the veterinary curriculum, it was refreshing to be able to apply the concepts to real cases with real animals in front of me. Further, the number of cattle-related cases presented in the first two years of veterinary school are extremely limited. Having the opportunity to work in a cattle practice was priceless.

During my stay I was able to help with chute work at the clinic, go on emergency calls, attend a couple brandings and work with Dr. Stout to consult with several clients. I especially enjoyed the brandings.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

The work was fun but, the interactions with the clients, their family and their friends were the best part of my externship.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Overall I feel like my externship reaffirmed my desire to work in a cattle practice. The doctors at Alliance Animal Clinic were great examples of how veterinarians should serve their community and clients. I recommend any veterinary student who has any interest in cattle practice to apply for a Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship.

Jeremy Haack
University of Nebraska–Lincoln & Iowa State University Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine

Was this a valuable experience? how important was it to get exposed to cattle?

This summer externship was a valuable experience. I was afforded the opportunity to use the knowledge I learned during my first year of veterinary school and apply it to a practical bovine clinical setting. I had a blast.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

Though I had grown up on a dairy farm, my experiences were still limited. I needed to be exposed to more types of dairy and beef practices, and observe the interactions of the veterinarians with clients and different therapeutic protocols. I needed to be sure that I in fact wanted to practice in mixed-animal medicine, being predominantly bovine, and what I actually realized is I think I may practice only bovine medicine. It is challenging, yet very rewarding.

I get to help take care of cows, insuring their health and welfare, while at the same time protecting the public’s meat and dairy supply.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

In general, cows are great. I have always enjoyed farming and bovine medicine. What I liked best about the externship was interacting with the farmers, the farmers’ wives, the hired men, etc. It doesn’t matter how smart a veterinary student or veterinarian is if she can’t communicate with the client. I thrive off of human interaction and enjoy educating clients on appropriate preventative medicine concepts, therapeutic protocols and how to ensure their animals live a life free from pain and suffering, one in which the animals can be well treated. Through the externship, I was able to view several different veterinarians doing just this, and they, too, afforded me the opportunity to practice herd health medicine, apply principles of school to practice, while also gaining experience in communicating these ideas to the clients we saw on a daily basis.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Cattle practice will be a career option. If anything, this experience provided through Pfizer Animal Health has made me think seriously about the possibility of only doing bovine medicine. I am currently on the mixed-animal track, but this past summer just proved I am a production-animal person, and I enjoy taking my knowledge with me, through the fields, into the barn and down the dirt road to find that cow that needs my help.

Liza G. Hendricks
Iowa State University
Valley Veterinary Associates
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Was this a valuable experience?

When I first began my four-week externship at Maria Stein Animal Clinic, I did not feel very confident with bovine medicine practices, but by the end of my experience, I was comfortable working with cattle and eager to continue learning. This externship was a truly valuable experience, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with friendly, caring and knowledgeable veterinarians.

Through this experience, I was able to practice and develop technical skills that can’t be acquired in a classroom. It was through repetition that I was able to learn to rectally palpate for pregnancy diagnosing. At the beginning of August, I had no idea what I was feeling when I stuck my arm in. By the end of four weeks, I could find ovaries, feel the difference in uterine horn sizes in early pregnant cows, and feel caruncles and fetuses in late pregnancy cows.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

In order to gain experience in large-animal medicine in a short time frame, it was important to be exposed to cattle in many different farm settings. The Maria Stein Animal Clinic in Mercer County, Ohio, was a great place for a bovine externship since there were numerous farms in the area allowing for a diverse exposure to bovine medicine. I experienced a wide variety of dairy farm operations as well as medical cases. On a farm call to examine a cow that was off-feed, we were able to diagnose that she was ketotic by testing her milk for the presence of ketone bodies. She was then treated with IV fluids containing glucose. After diagnosing and treating the cow, we instructed the farmer to give propylene glycol orally for the next couple days.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

During my externship, I observed and practiced many procedures including calf dehorning and castration, surgical umbilical hernia repair, semen collection by electroejaculation, preparing heifers for international export, necropsies, captive bolt euthanasia, and several displaced abomasum repairs by roll and toggle method and surgical omentopexy. During one of the LDA repairs, I was able to help prepare the cow for surgery by scrubbing the incision area and applying a local nerve block. I was also able to put on a sterile sleeve and feel the cow’s internal anatomy and deflate the gas-filled abomasum.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

After experiencing and learning about bovine medicine in the field, I have become genuinely interested in pursuing a veterinarian career in bovine medicine. I will continue to learn about large-animal veterinary medicine and hope to gain more hands-on experiences to become a competent veterinarian.
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What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed getting out of the clinic on sunny days and going out to the farms to help treat cows with pinkeye, do pregnancy checks or help pull calves. It also was really interesting meeting farmers and interacting with them. It was exciting for me to get to do a lot of hands-on work that I had never done before. Some of my favorites were giving epidurals so the doctor could implant embryos in the cows, draining a couple football-sized abscesses on two cows, learning about bull evaluation, and assisting with two DA surgeries. I also got a lot of practice with rectal palpation.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
This was a very positive experience for me and it really helped me with my confidence when working with and around cattle. I really hope that my future will include some type of cattle work.

Christine Inman
University of Minnesota
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Was this a valuable experience?
When I started veterinary school, I had very little experience with cattle. Before long, I began learning more about cattle and getting a little bit of hands-on involvement through my coursework. This exposure sparked an interest, and I started to think that working with cattle might not be that bad. Despite my interest though, I was extremely uncomfortable with my lack of knowledge. I had a comfort level with small animals that just wasn’t there with cattle.

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Southkent Veterinary Hospital
CALEB JENKIN  
Auburn University  
Animal Clinic of Monett

Was this a valuable experience?  
The externship in southwest Missouri was a very valuable experience. Being able to travel to this area, where there are such dense numbers of beef cattle, could only be made possible through opportunities such as the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship program.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?  
To be a successful food-animal practitioner upon graduating, a student must get lots of cattle exposure, and there is no better way to do so than this program.

What did you like most about cattle practice?  
What I liked most about cattle practice is it is home away from home for me. I fit right in with what was going on and was able to get involved immediately.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?  
I will absolutely consider a career with food-animal medicine.

KRYSAL KIDDER  
Kansas State University  
Corydon Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?  
This Bovine Externship opportunity was a valuable experience because it helped define my comfort level around cattle. Before this externship, I had only been around cattle for a two-day period and did not know how I would do with cattle handling. There is more in the technique you use with cattle than the physical strength of the person. If you understand the concepts of cattle handling, the knowledge of proper equipment, and working smarter, not harder, you can be a very successful large-animal veterinarian. However, do not forget that with good experience comes a good foundation for cattle practice.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?  
It was very important for me to get exposed to cattle so that I could be on a similar level, or even a little above, some of my classmates. I will be taking a large-animal rotation during my fourth year clinics and will have already practiced the basics and precautions that encompass cattle handling.

What did you like most about cattle practice?  
What I liked most about cattle practice is the veterinary-client-animal relationship. The veterinarians were very knowledgeable about cattle, and the clients had respect and trust that the vet knew, or would give their best effort toward, the situation they were confronted with.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?  
After this experience, I will still consider a mixed practice with cattle as a career option; but first, I need more experience to increase my comfort level when working with cattle. I would recommend applying for this externship with Pfizer Animal Health, as it will encourage you to find out if cattle practice is a path in which you are interested.
CALEB JENKIN
Auburn University

Animal Clinic of Monett

Was this a valuable experience?
The externship in southwest Missouri was a very valuable experience. Being able to travel to this area, where there are such dense numbers of beef cattle, could only be made possible through opportunities such as the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship program.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
To be a successful food-animal practitioner upon graduating, a student must get lots of cattle exposure, and there is no better way to do so than this program.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked most about cattle practice is it is home away from home for me. I fit right in with what was going on and was able to get involved immediately.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I will absolutely consider a career with food-animal medicine.

KRYSRATL KIDDER
Kansas State University

Corydon Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
The Bovine Externship opportunity was a valuable experience because it helped define my comfort level around cattle. Before this externship, I had only been around cattle for a two-day period and did not know how I would do with cattle handling. There is more in the technique you use with cattle than the physical strength of the person. If you understand the concepts of cattle handling, the knowledge of proper equipment, and working smarter, not harder, you can be a very successful large-animal veterinarian. However, do not forget that with good experience comes a good foundation for cattle practice.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important for me to get exposed to cattle so that I could be on a similar level, or even a little above, some of my classmates. I will be taking a large-animal rotation during my fourth year clinics and will have already practiced the basics and precautions that encompass cattle handling.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked most about cattle practice was the veterinary-client-animal relationship. The veterinarians were very knowledgeable about cattle, and the clients had respect and trust that the vet knew, or would give their best effort toward, the situation they were confronted with.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I will absolutely consider a career with food-animal medicine.
Was this a valuable experience?

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How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

My experience in Wisconsin was extremely valuable to my career. Working on smaller dairies, I was able to see many different procedures that I was able to observe. I never had one day like the others. Some days we would be palpating for pregnancy on a larger dairy and the next day we would be processing calves and trimming and treating feet. The veterinarians were also what I loved about the practice. Each veterinarian was extremely patient and positive with me. They were also open and honest as we discussed cases and the veterinary field.

AMANDA C. KISSELL
North Carolina State University
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How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

My experience in Wisconsin was extremely valuable to my career. Working on smaller dairies, I was able to see many different procedures and management practices. Being able to observe and participate in every day dairy medicine practices has boosted my competency level as I enter my third year of veterinary school. One of the most valuable experiences was being involved in numerous DA surgeries. Food-animal surgeries are hard to come by in veterinary school. While in Wisconsin, I was able to observe at least 20 DA surgeries and participate in at least 10. Not only did I get a chance to palpate a displaced abomasum through the incision site, but I also was able to get practice handling tissue, tacking the abomasum and suturing muscle and skin.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

There were so many things that I liked about the dairy practice in Waunakee. One of the most important was the variety of procedures that I was able to observe. I never had one day like the others. Some days we would be palpating for pregnancy on a larger dairy and the next day we would be processing calves and trimming and treating feet. The veterinarians were also what I loved about the practice. Each veterinarian was extremely patient and positive with me. They were also open and honest as we discussed cases and the veterinary field.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

My time in Wisconsin has reaffirmed my decision to work within the cattle industry. I truly enjoyed every minute that I spent with the veterinarians, clients and cows. Having enthusiastic and positive veterinarians to work with allowed me to improve many basic skills having to do with dairy medicine. Surgical, palpation, fluid administration and venipuncture skills were some of the most valuable skills that I learned. Working with the clients was also extremely educational. I learned how to communicate and practice with a client present. My experience will not be one I will soon forget and I look forward to my fourth year of veterinary school with the knowledge I gained at Waunakee Veterinary Service. I am extremely grateful for the support from the Pfizer Animal Health scholarship; without it I would not have been able to attain this experience.

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Was this a valuable experience?

Overall, this was an incredibly valuable experience for me, both as a future veterinarian and as a current employee of a farm. It provided me with plenty of hands-on experience, doing things such as IV-ing dairy cattle for everything from toxic mastitis to milk fever to ketosis, as well as witnessing and helping with lots of DA surgeries, delivering many calves, and some other less common things. This experience helped me put into practice things that I have already learned in my first two years of veterinary school, but it also taught me many other things that we haven’t learned yet in school, and even things that we may never cover in school. The other great thing about this externship was that you face every day. No one day can be said about anything, “practice makes perfect,” and to be able to get a lot more hands-on experience with cattle was great. For me, it was more important to get more medical hands-on experience, and I most certainly got that here.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

The thing I liked most about dairy cattle practice was just the real life decisions that you face every day. No one day is the same, and some days are most certainly busier than others. But as a dairy practitioner, you also face the problems that the dairy farmers face, and you are seen as someone who they look to for advice when the nutritionist can’t help or the milk system technician can’t help. As much as it is harder to know all about the various facets of dairy farming, it is a crucial part of being a dairy practitioner, and I really do enjoy that aspect. Overall, just interacting with farmers and being on the road going from call to call, wherever you’re needed, is fun. Exhausting, but fun.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

Prior to going into this externship, I had already had about four years of dairy cattle experience under my belt between my undergraduate experience at the University of Vermont and through working at a dairy farm near where I grew up for the past two summers. Yet, as can be said about anything, “practice makes perfect,” and to be able to get a lot more hands-on experience with cattle was great. For me, it was more important to get more medical hands-on experience, and I most certainly got that here.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Going into this externship, I already was considering being a dairy practitioner, and this experience did nothing but to further that desire. Like I said in the above paragraphs, it can be frustrating, tiring and difficult, but I love the way it integrates medicine with agriculture, improving production and the food industry. It is a great way for me to put my veterinary schooling to work, and I will most certainly consider dairy cattle practice as my main option once I graduate from veterinary school.

Given the additional information and context about the externship program, the value of hands-on experience, and the choice of considering a career in cattle practice, the text provides a comprehensive view of the benefits and challenges of the externship experience at the Bovine Externship Program.
Was this a valuable experience?

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For the Bovine Externship, I worked with the Lena Veterinary Clinic, located in Lena, Ill. Since there are seven food-animal veterinarians who are partners of the veterinary clinic, I was able to experience several different ways of practicing food-animal medicine. By spending four weeks with the veterinary clinic, I found it rewarding to experience as much as I did. I grew up on a dairy farm, where I understand the day-to-day work schedule of a farmer. However, by visiting different size dairies, which are each operated in their own unique way, I was able to witness other aspects of raising cattle. During my externship, I was involved with weekly herd checks, routine vaccinations, emergency farm calls and treatment of ill cows. I also was allowed to perform pregnancy checks, as well as learning how to pump medication, as well as learning how to pump oral fluids into a cow’s stomach. Also, Lena Veterinary Clinic operates its own mastitis culturing lab. During this externship, the veterinarians taught me how to plate milk samples, read the results and determine which bacteria are causing the issue at different farms. The most important aspect that I learned, through my externship, was being allowed to perform physical examinations and treatments. I have grown up watching veterinarians treat cattle, but this specific program allowed me to truly experience what the daily life of a food-animal veterinarian is like.

Another experience that I received involved consultations. I view this line of work as the future for food-animal veterinarians, especially when one is dealing with larger-scale farms. For example, I was involved with a consultation about milk quality for a large-scale farm in Wisconsin. Issues such as somatic cell count, milking procedures and location of manure removal were discussed. For another large-scale farm, I was involved with a consultation on breeding. This specific farm has a rotary parlor that currently fits Holsteins in its space.
farmer was discussing with ABS Global and Lena Veterinary Clinic about breeding the Holsteins to Norwegian Reds in a two-way breeding program versus a three-way breeding program, which would include Jerseys. An additional decision the farmer was making was whether to use Norwegian Reds or Brown Swiss for his operation. The main concern he had was whether the next generation of cattle would fit well in the rotary parlor. It was interesting to learn the genetic information, especially pertaining to the Norwegian Reds, and how it would impact the future for this owner.

The main project that I was in charge of during my externship with Lena Veterinary Clinic was creating a drug protocol portfolio. A list of common cattle diseases was created, and the veterinary clinic compiled its treatment protocols for each disease. I organized the information and placed it in a binder. The purpose of the drug protocol portfolio is to educate clients about proper treatment options and drug usage. Lena Veterinary Clinic has created this portfolio to provide the latest medical information to ensure the overall health and safety of the animals. Also, I created a “Withdrawal Drug Time” document, which contained information regarding commonly used drugs, dosages, routes of administration, frequency, duration, and meat and milk withdrawal. This information will be distributed to all farm clientele, as means of preventing improper usage of medication.

In conclusion, I found the Bovine Externship to be most rewarding and feel fortunate to have been accepted for the program. It is very important to work with cattle, first hand, and this allowed me to enhance my medical skills. The aspect about being a country veterinarian is what appeals to me the most with cattle practice. I enjoy visiting different farms, meeting various people, and having a jack-of-all-trades ability. Whether it is performing pregnancy checks, trimming a cow’s hoof or administering medication, I found each day’s schedule to be different. That is what I love about being a food-animal veterinarian.

During the day, I understand that farms are becoming farther apart and it is important for the veterinarian to be able to travel to each place in a timely manner. However, I know this is how it is, and one has to just deal with it. As a result of completing this externship, I will definitely consider cattle practice as a career choice! Thank you for allowing me this opportunity!

Whether it is performing pregnancy checks, trimming a cow’s hoof or administering medication, I found each day’s schedule to be different. That is what I love about being a food-animal veterinarian. I am so glad I was able to participate in the Bovine Externship Program through Pfizer Animal Health. I felt that it was a very valuable experience and helped strengthen my decision to go into bovine veterinary medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
For me, it was very important to get exposed to as many cattle in as many different settings as possible, so I was pleased with the varying cases I saw at Carroll Veterinary Clinic.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
We worked with large and small feedlots, cow-calf operations and club animals. That’s what I like the most about cattle practice — the variation of work day to day and with the season. There’s a rush of work at certain times of the year and relaxed work schedules in between. I work best in that type of environment.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I definitely will consider cattle practice as a career option after this experience. In fact, my participation in the Bovine Externship Program solidified my decision to practice bovine medicine post-graduation.

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Serena Lawfer
Continued from previous page

PAIGE LINDEN
Iowa State University

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I definitely will consider cattle practice as a career option after this experience. In fact, my participation in the Bovine Externship Program solidified my decision to practice bovine medicine post-graduation.
Was this a valuable experience?
This experience was extremely valuable to me both personally and professionally. During my time at Montrose Veterinary Clinic, I was exposed to many different areas of veterinary medicine in addition to the cattle industry. I was able to live in a new part of the country and experience and part of veterinary medicine that was unknown to me. I would highly recommend this externship to any veterinary student with little experience in the bovine field and to those already considering bovine practice.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important to me to get exposed to cattle. I had very limited experience coming into this externship and was considering going into bovine practice. To fully understand the beef and dairy industries, you have to spend time in the field. This time allows you to learn directly from the dairymen and ranchers who spend every day with these animals. I found that I learned just as much from the owners of the cattle as I did from the veterinarian I was working with. One of my biggest regrets is that I didn’t get to spend enough time with cattle on this externship.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
My favorite part of cattle practice was getting to go out to the ranches and dairies. I really enjoyed getting to see how each operation was managed and work with different people every day. Cattle ranchers and dairy owners are very dedicated to the health of their animals, especially since their financial well-being depends on these animals. I learned a lot about the economics of the cattle industry in addition to bovine medicine.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After my externship, I would consider cattle practice as a career option. I would like to incorporate cattle into a mixed-animal practice. I plan to continue to expand on this externship by incorporating more bovine preceptorships into my fourth-year schedule. I would really like to end up working in a practice where I see cattle on a daily basis in addition to other large animals.

Whitney Madigan
Oregon State University
Bear River Animal Hospital

Whitney Madigan
Oregon State University
Bear River Animal Hospital

Was this a valuable experience?
This was the MOST valuable experience I have ever had working for or shadowing at a clinic. The veterinarians and staff were so incredibly helpful and interested in my learning. They not only tolerated my extensive questioning but also entertained me with case studies, asking me what I would do if placed in similar situations. That was extremely helpful, especially in syncing estrus cycles.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Extremely important!!! I don’t think I would have considered working at a bovine practice or mixed practice without having been able to participate in this externship. I really appreciate the opportunity because it helped me realize I enjoyed working with cattle.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I think the thing I liked most about cattle practice was the efficiency in which one had to work with both time and materials. With so many animals needing to be seen in one day, it was crucial that everyone worked fast and efficiently. I also liked that cattle producers and the farm employees were, as a whole, very nice, down-to-earth people. I know this could be due to the location I had my externship, but I appreciated it nonetheless.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
My desire for a career in cattle went from probable to guaranteed due to this experience. I really enjoyed working with both the animals and the people involved in dairy operations.

Sara Livesay
Oregon State University
Montrose Veterinary Clinic

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Was this a valuable experience?
This experience was extremely valuable to me both personally and professionally. During my time at Montrose Veterinary Clinic, I was exposed to many different areas of veterinary medicine in addition to the cattle industry. I was able to live in a new part of the country and experience and part of veterinary medicine that was unknown to me. I would highly recommend this externship to any veterinary student with little experience in the bovine field and to those already considering bovine practice.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important to me to get exposed to cattle. I had very limited experience coming into this externship and was considering going into bovine practice. To fully understand the beef and dairy industries, you have to spend time in the field. This time allows you to learn directly from the dairymen and ranchers who spend every day with these animals. I found that I learned just as much from the owners of the cattle as I did from the veterinarian I was working with. One of my biggest regrets is that I didn’t get to spend enough time with cattle on this externship. Although I enjoyed the mixed-animal practice I was at, I didn’t get to work with cattle every day. I would have liked to spend more time directly with cattle to fully immerse myself in bovine practice for the month of my externship.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
My favorite part of cattle practice was getting to go out to the ranches and dairies. I really enjoyed getting to see how each operation was managed and work with different people every day. Cattle ranchers and dairy owners are very dedicated to the health of their animals, especially since their financial well-being depends on these animals. I learned a lot about the economics of the cattle industry in addition to bovine medicine.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After my externship, I would consider cattle practice as a career option. I would like to incorporate cattle into a mixed-animal practice. I plan to continue to expand on this externship by incorporating more bovine preceptorships into my fourth-year schedule. I would really like to end up working in a practice where I see cattle on a daily basis in addition to other large animals.
Was this a valuable experience?

My four week Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship was absolutely invaluable. On the first day alone, I tripled the technical experience achieved during the entire first year of veterinary school. From there it only got better. I thoroughly enjoyed shadowing the veterinarians in the bovine practice I was matched with, and I would recommend this experience to every veterinary student.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

It was critically important in my mind to be exposed to cattle because they are such a large part of Michigan’s economy and our country’s food supply. I was able to see and understand how the dairy and beef industries create jobs, are often still family owned businesses, and produce milk and meat to keep us healthy and strong. It was interesting to see the veterinarian’s role in protecting this through very careful drug use and special considerations for organic farms. The bovine veterinarian also has to troubleshoot herd health problems and welfare, then work with the farmer to improve efficiency. More milk could mean lower costs and safe, nutritious food sources available to more people. This externship allowed me to confidently take my first step into the world of cattle, a situation that would have otherwise been quite intimidating due to my lack of previous experience. Without this exposure I might not have sought out cattle in veterinary school and missed out on a very rewarding career option.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

I loved every minute of this externship! There was so much I liked that it is hard to pick out my favorite aspects. I was attracted to the herd health scheduling where the practice knows how many clients and appointments and when and where they will be for at least a month out. I also liked working outdoors in a rural community, where you know all the farmers and can wave to everyone you pass and are really a part of that community. It was awesome to see how much the farmers respect the veterinarian’s opinion and entrust the entire worth of their business to the veterinarian’s recommendations. This relationship was not something I really knew about prior to this externship and it is really something I would enjoy being a part of. Another aspect I liked is how the bovine veterinarian can make such a large impact and even perform emergency surgery for less than $200. I also enjoyed that cattle are such amazingly resilient, docile and curious animals, who wouldn’t want to work with them?!?

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

After this experience, I will definitely consider cattle veterinary practice as a career. I had nothing but fun every day, and my eyes were really opened to what I was missing out on. I look forward to future wetlabs, clerkships or externships that will allow me to work with cattle. Now, I cannot imagine my career without cattle.

This experience was extremely valuable. It was a great way to get a feel of what practice in bovine medicine entails and to get hands-on experience working with cows. The majority of my externship involved dairy cattle, but I did spend a few days on a feedlot as well. All of the veterinarians I went with were really awesome and extremely patient in answering all my questions. I was able to do pregnancy checks, to learn more about working with producers concerning herd health management, to vaccinate, to assist and even participate in surgical procedures, and to integrate what I’d learned about bacteria and viruses with actual cases. Overall, I feel much more comfortable handling cattle, and many of the techniques I learned I will be able to apply my junior and senior years.

There isn’t really anything I don’t like about cattle practice from what I gathered in this experience. The time I spent on the feedlot was a real eye-opener in that veterinary services are almost never utilized unless the producers need to buy more pharmaceuticals. The mentality behind running a feedlot vs. running a dairy is also different; I much preferred working on dairies. But at the same time, I could see why the feedlot made different decisions for animal welfare, and in both cases the animals were not treated poorly.

If I could find somewhere after graduation from vet school that would be able to support me being a bovine practitioner, I would definitely consider it as a career option.

Hayley McWilliams
Colorado State University
The Dairy Authority, LLC
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Was this a valuable experience?
I truly believe this was not just a valuable but priceless experience. This externship was my first time riding with a large-animal vet, and I couldn’t get enough of it. The vets and staff at East Holmes did everything they could to maximize my learning, from letting me travel with them during the day, emergency calls, large animal and small animal, running labwork, showing me rare or interesting fecals, assigning me “homework” or just plain talking me through procedures. I was able to palpate displaced abomasums, draw blood, palpate rectally and assist in sick work literally seven days a week. This is truly an all-in experience that either tells you you’re where you want to be, or you don’t want to do it again.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Although I knew basic handling skills, it was immensely important to get exposed to cattle in veterinary conditions. It’s important to learn how to work with them, how to keep yourself and the animal safe, and how to get done what you need to for the health of the animal. Every little bit helps later, even things like getting kicked (I am now more well acquainted with the condition nervous ketosis). I’ve been told that although we do a full twelve months of clinicals senior year, you never get enough palpation in. Doing everything you can on your own to maximize your learning and skills can only help you later in your career.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I really enjoyed working outside with the farmers in an all-out, going to get dirty, get the job done via any “MacGyver” methods necessary. It was an excellent mental exercise every day, as well as invigorating (when not tiring) physical work in a slightly more laid-back atmosphere than 100% small animal work.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I still want to work as a large-only or large-predominantly veterinarian. It was very interesting, as well as enjoyable, working with cattle, as well as other large-animal species. I don’t plan to specialize in cattle practice, but I would love to live in an area and work with dairy and beef herds.
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ASHLEY MISNER
Ohio State University
Coldwater Animal Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
The Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship Program was a wonderful experience! Coldwater Animal Clinic is a mixed-animal practice, so I was able to see both large- and small-animal cases. All of the cases were very interesting and a good learning experience because I have limited experience working with cattle. I was able to stay at the clinic, which allowed me to go on all of the ambulatory emergency calls as well as assist with the small-animal emergencies.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
The externship was very important for cattle exposure, both on the veterinary side and the farm side (especially since I did not grow up on a farm). I learned how to safely work cattle, including how to handle and “read” a bull. I was able to observe how both small and large dairies are managed, as well as learn the veterinarian’s role in offering suggestions if something is not working well for the farmer. Without this program, I don’t think I would be able to get such a cohesive cattle experience. The four-week block is perfect for true learning to take place. By the end of the externship, I was able to relate a current case to something I’d seen previously and come up with a few differential diagnoses.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
One of the things I like most about cattle practice is the atmosphere. The farmers are very laid-back and generally very willing to assist the veterinarian in any way possible. The farmers I met on the externship asked a lot of questions about veterinary school and whether I wanted to be a large- or small-animal veterinarian. Of course, they were very excited to hear that I wanted to become a large-animal vet. I also really enjoyed the fact that the farmers know just about everything possible about each individual cow. They know exactly who has been off feed, how long they have been off, and who has dropped in milk production. They also know each cow’s individual temperament, which is very helpful to the vet at times!

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
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JILLIAN MOSER  
University of Missouri-Columbia

Before the externship this summer at Osage Veterinary Clinic, I did not have any cattle veterinary experience, despite the fact that I want to go into mixed-animal practice. The Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship encouraged my interest in food-animal medicine without having a vast knowledge previously. Since cattle is such a major portion of a mixed-animal practice, it felt important to have this exposure. I have learned that cattle practice is more than medicine; it is a lifestyle. In addition, the externship this summer also has been useful for me to apply my experiences and knowledge toward the food-animal courses this year. I valued every case because it was a new learning experience. I enjoyed traveling to the farms with the veterinarian for various calls, including performing pregnancy examinations using ultrasound on heifers, breeding soundness exams in bulls, assessing a calf suspected of failure of passive transfer, evaluating dystocias (most likely caused in part to the high ambient temperatures this summer), assisting with treatment of lameness causes by a selection of etiologies, and other case presentations. On alternating Monday mornings, time was spent at the local sale barn, where I had the opportunity to observe several cattle in a short period of time, as well as practicing pregnancy examinations on recently purchased beef cows and heifers. A less enjoyable aspect about cattle practice was the distance between farm calls, which often limited the number of patients seen in a day compared to a clinic setting. However, each farm call was a new experience for me, especially with learning to navigate gates and squeeze chutes, moving individual or groups of cattle, and interacting with clients. During the middle of this externship, I did feel some anxiety as I realized how much I lagged behind in cattle veterinary experience at this stage in my veterinary education; however, I restored my resolve to enter into mixed-animal practice. Cattle practice is still very much a career option for me. I have just learned that I need to gain more practice in this field to feel confident in performing cattle veterinary medicine in the future.

CADE MOSES  
Kansas State University

Was this a valuable experience?  
This experience was extremely valuable to my future career. I was able to get real world, hands-on experience and begin to get an idea of the business side of practicing in a veterinary clinic.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?  
I have been around cattle my entire life, but this experience through Pfizer Animal Health allowed me to start seeing and interacting with cattle through the role of a veterinarian. I feel that this helps me start my clinical experience with a head start in relation to many veterinary students.

What did you like most about cattle practice?  
What I like most about a cattle practice are the producers. I grew up on a farm and ranch and know how difficult it can be to make a living, and the impact that poor animal health can have on your livelihood. I feel that helping these producers to maintain the health and profitability of their resources is very rewarding.

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I will definitely pursue cattle practice as a career option. I may have to supplement my income with other types of veterinary medicine early in my career, but my end goal would be a strictly cattle practice with a role in consulting.
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MATT MUNDY
Mississippi State University
Magnolia Veterinary Clinic

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Even though I have a large amount of experience with cattle, I was able to apply what I have learned through school and also able to learn new and exciting things about dairy and beef cattle. I was able to see firsthand different diseases, parasites and illness that I have learned about. These experiences are some that can’t be taught in the classroom and will be useful throughout the rest of my schooling as well as my adjustment into practicing as a veterinarian.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I really enjoyed the opportunity the see some large dairy operations and enjoyed being able to improve on my skills at checking pregnancy in cattle. I really enjoyed working with the beef cattle and learning how to diagnose and treat numerous different problems.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I have the full intentions of becoming a food-animal veterinarian and concentrating most of my work with cattle.

I can’t thank Pfizer Animal Health enough for the opportunity that it supplied me this summer. I have the full intentions of becoming a food-animal veterinarian and concentrating most of my work with cattle.

KAKI NICOTRE
Texas A&M University
Hitch Consulting

“Sometimes, getting your foot in the door to your dream is the hardest part. This externship was exactly the career and educational boost I needed to further solidify my place in an agricultural practice.”

“I was excited to “get down and dirty” and be able to apply at least some of the mundane memorization of the first and second years of vet school to an actual clinical setting. Opportunities to do so came fast, and in unexpected ways. From evaluating cattle and discussing the physiology of acidosis, pathologic changes expected in acute interstitial pneumonia, or the pharmacology of DRAXXIN® versus Nuflor®. I proved to myself in just a few short days that remnants of long-forgotten anatomy and obscure microbes were still in my brain, and it became so much more real as soon as I could see and physically touch the clinical application of such things. I found myself repeatedly thinking, “That was why I needed to know that!” I learned quickly that it’s always the classes I think to be least applicable or important are actually the most useful (i.e., public health, epidemiology). I also came home with a whole new language (I’ll refrain from mentioning all the new words the cowboys taught me) from “railer” to AP, “hot feed,” “buler,” “waterbelly” and many others. I can certainly say now that I feel far more comfortable having a conversation with a client without having to look up lay terms. Of course, Dr. Blood was excellent at taking a hands-on approach. Nothing was off limits for me. We spent an entire afternoon “posting pigs.” I did more than 50 necropsies that day, probably more than I will see in all of vet school. I worked directly with the doctors treating cattle, spent early mornings next to the chute with the processing crew and many afternoons pulling cattle with the cowboys. This top-to-bottom approach to learning was critical in my understanding of production medicine.”

“Thanks to Pfizer Animal Health, I spent four weeks at Hitch Consulting in Guymon, Okla., with Dr. Shawn Blood. These four weeks were the highlight of my summer, despite the historic Oklahoma heat. Since the beginning of my decision to work toward my doctorate in veterinary medicine, I have always known that food-animal practice, specifically bovine practice, was my ultimate calling. Sometimes, getting your foot in the door to your dream is the hardest part. This externship was exactly the career and educational boost I needed to further solidify my place in an agricultural practice. I went into this externship with three goals in mind: to utilize two years of textbook knowledge into working clinical skills, to become more familiar with veterinary and lay terminology used in the beef industry and specifically feedlots, and to develop a working relationship with a practicing veterinarian that can be used beyond the scope of these four weeks. I was easily able to check these “tasks” off my list in a very short time. Additionally, I was able to take away so much more from my experience and learned things far beyond the scope of my veterinary curriculum. Most importantly, this externship helped to cement my plans of food-animal practice. Arriving at Hitch Feeders my first day, I was excited to “get down and dirty” and be able to apply at least some of the mundane memorization of the first and second years of vet school to an actual clinical setting. Opportunities to do so came fast, and in unexpected ways. From evaluating cattle and discussing the physiology of acidosis, pathologic changes expected in acute interstitial pneumonia, or the pharmacology of DRAXXIN® versus Nuflor®. I proved to myself in just a few short days that remnants of long-forgotten anatomy and obscure microbes were still in my brain, and it became so much more real as soon as I could see and physically touch the clinical application of such things. I found myself repeatedly thinking, “That was why I needed to know that!” I learned quickly that it’s always the classes I think to be least applicable or important are actually the most useful (i.e., public health, epidemiology). I also came home with a whole new language (I’ll refrain from mentioning all the new words the cowboys taught me) from “railer” to AP, “hot feed,” “buler,” “waterbelly” and many others. I can certainly say now that I feel far more comfortable having a conversation with a client without having to look up lay terms. Of course, Dr. Blood was excellent at taking a hands-on approach. Nothing was off limits for me. We spent an entire afternoon “posting pigs.” I did more than 50 necropsies that day, probably more than I will see in all of vet school. I worked directly with the doctors treating cattle, spent early mornings next to the chute with the processing crew and many afternoons pulling cattle with the cowboys. This top-to-bottom approach to learning was critical in my understanding of production medicine.”

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Kaki Nicotre
Continued from previous page

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Within their system. Before this externship, I never would have understood the benefit or market variations of such things. I learned so much beyond the veterinary clinical medicine than I knew I would find in these four weeks. I learned so much about the market, inner workings and political issues of the beef industry. This knowledge is crucial to my success as a bovine practitioner. I was nervous about fully immersing myself in this externship. A small part of me was worried that perhaps when the reality of the job set in, I would change my mind. That perhaps, all the work was for naught. I can say with confidence that despite the unbearable July heat, the early early mornings and the infinite blowing dust that this is absolutely the career for me. I spent as much time as was possible asking questions, observing cattle handling and working with every single person I could beg to let me ride in the truck with them. I wanted to know as much as possible about the feedyard. I can say that I spent my time well and came back bursting with knowledge, and a lot more questions. Several of these questions stick out in my mind. First, from an overall animal welfare prospective, I feel that the industry has excellent standards, solid science and well-intended motivation; but the standards need consequences for not being followed. It is clear that we have made amazing progress in the system in the last 20 years, but I don’t think we have gone far enough. Biosecurity in the beef industry is chronically subpar, training of entry level workers and political issues of the beef industry. This knowledge is crucial to my success as a bovine practitioner. I was nervous about fully immersing myself in this externship. A small part of me was worried that perhaps when the reality of the job set in, I would change my mind. That perhaps, all the work was for naught. I can say with confidence that despite the unbearable July heat, the early early mornings and the infinite blowing dust that this is absolutely the career for me.

I learned that I would enjoy this externship, and I was determined to accomplish the goals set forth in my application. I am so overwhelmed at the amount of knowledge beyond just clinical medicine that I took away from the experience. And I am honored to be able to call Dr. Blood a colleague; he is an amazing doctor with an amazing heart. I am now a more well-rounded student, and a knowledge of some of the areas where my curriculum falls short will make me work harder to fill these voids. In short, thank you for the opportunity. It has solidified my career choice, made me work harder for my goals and will, in the end, make me a better veterinarian.

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I was pleasantly surprised with the amount of herd work we did for the time of the year that I was in Wyoming. Some of the common procedures that we did working with bulls included semen evaluation, trichomonas testing, lameness and reproductive evaluations and hoof trimming. Work with cows and heifers included pregnancy checking, Bangs vaccinations, branding, dehorning and artificial insemination. We also began some calf processing, including vaccinations, ear tagging, deworming, fly control and castrating bull calves. A few necropsies were performed on calves found dead on a nearby ranch as well. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the cattle and veterinarians. The veterinarians were very good about letting me get hands-on experience, explaining procedures and quizzes me. I further developed my technique and understanding of rectal palpation and ultrasound technology. One of the highlights of my time in Pine Bluffs was doing paired rectal palpation and ultrasound interpretation on a group of heifers at a nearby feedlot in Nebraska. It truly solidified my understanding of anatomy and dramatically increased my confidence in determining open heifers from pregnant heifers (along with how far along they were). I didn’t have much experience with bulls prior to this experience, and I learned a lot about using the electroejaculation method and evaluating semen. While I had prior vaccination, castrating and artificial insemination involvement, it was good to continue practice and learn about different techniques. At the end of the day, I’d often be hot, sweaty, dirty and covered in feces, but I absolutely loved it! It is enjoyable to be around cattle and gives me a sense of completion and satisfaction in working hard. I certainly see working at a cattle practice as part of my future. I had a very enjoyable externship and am very grateful for the opportunity.
change the course for the path I need to get there. It became clear to me that I will need to spend several years in a basic food-animal or mixed-animal practice to fully understand the intricacies of the market before I move into production medicine. I need to further my knowledge of agricultural economics and the beef market. And, perhaps most important, I need to learn Spanish.

I knew that I would enjoy this externship, and I was determined to accomplish the goals I set forth in my application. I am so overwhelmed at the amount of knowledge beyond just clinical medicine that I took away from the experience. And I am honored to be able to call Dr. Blood a colleague; he is an amazing doctor with an amazing heart. I am now a more well-rounded student, and a better veterinary assistant producer. I was pleasantly surprised with the amount of herd work we did for the time of the year that I was in Wyoming. Some of the common procedures that we did working with bulls included semen evaluation, trichomoniasis testing, lameness and reproductive evaluations and hoof trimming. Work with cows and heifers included pregnancy checking, Bangs vaccinations, branding, dehorning and artificial insemination. We also began some calf processing, including vaccinations, ear tagging, deworming, fly control and castrating bull calves. A few necropsies were performed on calves found dead on a nearby ranch as well.

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I found this experience very valuable. I moved around a lot growing up and have never lived in an area that supports farm animals. Because of this externship, I was able to gain my first hands-on experience with large-animal medicine.

As I am interested in mixed-animal medicine, this exposure to large-animal medicine was critical in my decision-making process to determine what kind of medicine I want to practice.

I liked working outside; I enjoyed the physical labor combined with the medicine. I also enjoyed the people. I find that bovine medicine attracts individuals who work long, hard hours but also like to talk and are very friendly.

Yes, definitely. I plan to pursue mixed-animal medicine and may choose a rural or underserved area. I worked in a mixed-animal practice this summer, and I enjoyed the combination of beef cattle and small-animal medicine.
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Was this a valuable experience?

How important was it to be exposed to cattle?

What did I like most about cattle practice?

Would I consider cattle practice as a career option?
Was this a valuable experience?
This was a valuable learning experience for me. I worked at Herd Health, a six-vet dairy practice in Caldwell, Idaho. Being from Tennessee, my background going into the summer was much stronger in beef cattle and cow/calf operations than dairy work. This externship allowed me to see another side of bovine veterinary work. The doctors I worked with were very knowledgeable and great mentors. I feel like in the future, I will always be able to call on them for advice. It was one of the best summers I can remember.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Going into the summer, I expected to be working with cattle each day. That was an important aspect of this externship to me and one of the principle reasons I applied for it. Being in vet school has been educational, but without being able to put that knowledge together with hands-on application, it gets lost amid all the other information we learn. Daily herd checks made me much more confident in my palpation skills. I performed hernia surgeries and DA surgeries myself, instead of only watching. Synchronization protocols have become engrained in my mind, and I can finally remember them without struggling. Even my basic physical exam skills I feel better about after using them routinely.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
The best part of this externship was learning how much I love dairy vet work. Up until this summer, I planned on joining a beef practice after graduation. This experience opened my eyes to another aspect of medicine that I previously failed to appreciate. Herd Health was one of the best clinics I have worked for. They encouraged me to improve my practical skills and always were patient and helpful. My confidence level in myself is much greater now than it was at the beginning of the summer, not just for dairy work, but vet medicine in general. Another side of the job that I really enjoyed was the consulting work. I am planning now to take some extra dairy consulting classes to become more proficient.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I would love to join a bovine practice upon graduation. Before this summer I planned to work in a clinic that focused mostly on beef cattle. Now I would like to find a practice with at least 50% dairy work. I am excited to be closer to graduation and going into practice!

I want to thank Pfizer Animal Health, Dr. Robin Falkner, Dr. Rob Dey, Dr. Lance Cheney, Dr. Brian Voortman, Dr. Kirk Mueller, Dr. Jason Keller and Dr. Marcus Skacel for providing me with this invaluable opportunity.

JANA POWELL
University of Georgia

Was this a valuable experience?
Traveling to Strasburg, Pa., to shadow Dr. Darcie Stolz and her associates was one of the most rewarding experiences of my veterinary education. The opportunity to actually see how a primarily bovine practice functioned was invaluable. Prior to this externship, my experience with cattle was very limited. Even though I have had an interest in dairy medicine for some time, my lack of exposure to cattle was the only thing that kept me from having full confidence that I truly wanted to be a bovine practitioner following school.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
During my time with Dr. Stolz, I got to experience so much! I really liked how she and each of her associates had different techniques for doing the same thing. For example, each of the vets had his or her own way of surgically repairing a left displaced abomasum. I liked being able to see each of the unique techniques and how each of the vets interacted with clients differently. This was particularly interesting since the majority of the clients were Amish.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
The client interactions made me realize that what I like the most about bovine medicine is working with farmers. I like being able to help farmers make decisions that are profitable for their bottom line, but also best for the animal. My background in statistics made the frequent use of statistics in making these profitable decisions really intriguing!

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
In conclusion, my time with Dr. Stolz and her associates affirmed my interest in bovine medicine. I love so many aspects of this field that I would be truly happy to pursue this as my future occupation. Thank you, Pfizer Animal Health, for making this experience possible.
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Was this a valuable experience?
I really valued my experience at Lancaster Veterinary Clinic. The veterinarians did a fabulous job letting me do a lot of hands-on learning. This experience allowed me to practice and get much more comfortable doing some of the basic veterinary procedures, such as giving injections, pregnancy checking, doing physical examinations and starting IVs.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was extremely important to me to get a lot of exposure to cattle. I’ve done some veterinary work with cattle, but this externship allowed me to work with them daily, which I enjoyed immensely.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
The cows, of course, were really great to work on, but what I liked most about cattle practice was working with the farmers.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
This experience has confirmed my decision to go into cattle practice as a career.

I spent four weeks working with a really great team of veterinarians and staff that I now can call my friends. They accepted me and directed me and became vested in my success.

Was this a valuable experience?
The experience proved to be very valuable for me at this stage in my career as a veterinarian student. I was able to palpate a lot of cattle and experience real-life scenarios of some of the situations I am learning in the classroom such as common dairy disease. Dr. Feese, my mentor, established a milk culture lab while I was there, and I saw the benefits of in-house testing, its capabilities and limitations. Finally, I gained a bit of confidence and experience in the field that I know will help me fourth year in the clinic and throughout life.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Being exposed to cattle, I learned many things about handling, working cattle and basic herd health management. I grew up on a beef cattle farm but quickly realized my inefficiencies and incompetencies. This was humbling, but today I am not as intimidated and feel more capable in a stockyard setting.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed visiting with farm owners and laborers. Each operation had its own unique set of challenges and benefits. Hopefully, I can share some of the successes with others and learn to work with the challenges that I will inevitably face one day. I also enjoyed learning to solve problems, particularly the sick cow cases. Each of these scenarios allowed me the opportunity to try and systematically prioritize a list of differentials, appropriate tests and then potential treatments. Hopefully, I will be doing this on my own one day.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Since the beginning of my career in veterinarian school, I have wanted to pursue food-animal medicine, especially cattle. While in Kentucky, I realized that there is a demand for such practitioners, and owners are willing to compensate you for services. Prior to this, I did not think that I could support myself or family with a food-animal option.

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KITT RHINER
University of Wisconsin

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REAGAN SIMMS RODGERS
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I’ve done some veterinary work with cattle, but this externship allowed me to work with them daily, which I enjoyed immensely.
Was this a valuable experience?
This was a very valuable experience for me. After this experience, we will consider cattle practice as a career option. I have worked with cattle before, from a farmer’s perspective, and learned a lot from those experiences. However, this experience let me see the veterinarian perspective of cattle work. I learned that there is so much more to cattle work than what I thought and had so much fun doing the work that I wanted to continue working after all the cattle were gone. This experience helped solidify my desire to become a cattle veterinarian. Below is a summary of what I did on a weekly basis during my experience:

We started out at Blue Grass Stockyards-Lexington. She and her two main employees work Mondays and Tuesdays each and every week. While there, we processed cattle that were bought by clients of Dr. Dawn’s. Different vaccines and procedures were followed for different buyers and cattle that came through the working facility. The majority of cattle were ear tagged (different colors for different buyers), fly tagged, vaccinated for black leg, pinkeye, mycoplasma, IBR, BVD, PI3, BRV, dosed with a dewormer, and most bulls were banded, although for one particular buyer, the bulls were cut. Some Holstein calves that came through were branded with a variety of brands depending on owner preference. We also dehorned every animal that came through the hydraulic chute by wrapping a castration band around the horns, using hedge trimmers to cut the horns, cotton to fill any holes, and then cauterizing to stop blood flow. One day we pulled a live bull calf from a halter that had been in labor for about three days according to the owner. On palpation the heifer was dilated, but not completely, plus the calf was really big (about 115 pounds when we pulled him out). It took a lot of work and time but eventually we got the calf out. Finally, the biggest thing that we did at this stockyard is pregnancy-checking heifers for them to be sold guaranteed open. If they were bred they were sold in a different lot. Not only were they checked to see whether they were pregnant to be sold, but some were pregnancy-checked once they were bought. Also, some of the older cows were checked to give the buyers an ideal of pregnancy status before buying.

The second stockyard that we worked at was Blue Grass Stockyards-East (in Mt. Sterling). We worked there on Wednesdays and Saturdays and did very similar procedures here that we did in Lexington. However, here there was much more pregnancy-checking on cattle before they were bought. More of the younger bulls were banded, while older bulls were cut. We tried using ultrasound, however, due to time constraints and little practice time, it was rarely used. One particular new procedure that was done at Mt. Sterling that was not done in Lexington was semen checks in bulls. We used an electroejaculator inserted into the rectum of the bull, we trimmed the hair off of the sheath, measured scrotal circumference, collected a semen sample and observed the semen on a slide under a microscope. With the microscope we looked for motility and concentration. If the bull passed that test, then we stained the slide and observed again to see if the sperm had any tails without heads, crooked tails, cytoplasmic droplets, and any other abnormalities. Based on age of the bull and using all our measurements the bull was either given a green tag for passing the semen check or a red tag for failing the check and sent to the sale ring. On the cows that were pregnancy checked before being sold, a special metal ear tag was placed in their left ear. This was to certify were the cattle came from, so the State of Kentucky could keep an eye on a disease, like TB, brucellosis, or Johne’s could be tracked so the state could keep its certification for being a TB-, brucellosis- and Johne’s-free state.

We did farm calls on Thursdays and Fridays to work cattle herds of around 150 or more head per farm. The first two weeks we did two calls a day, which took most of the day. The last two weeks we only did one call a day because the temperatures were so hot that we did not want to stress out the cattle and cause problems. We did the same procedures at the farms that we did at the stockyards, only with varying degrees of “safe” and “efficient” working facilities. For one client, we dewormed, fly tagged, put a Ralgro® implant in the cattle’s ear, and treated any pinkeye problems. We treated more than 322 head for this one client. For another client, his whole family (him, his two brothers and his cousin), each owned about 150 Holstein calves, which were vaccinated for black leg, pinkeye, mycoplasma, and IBR, BRSV, BVD, and PI3. Complex. Sometimes we branded the different herds with a specific brand that the owners chose in order to keep the cattle separated by ownership. These were all younger male calves, so we banded them. Many farms wanted us to veterinarian-check their herd of cows to see about when they would calve and how their bulls did during the breeding season. We also did semen checks on bulls before they were placed into breeding groups or taken to the stockyards.

Sundays and afternoons were for working on Dr. Dawn’s and her husband’s farms. We fed cattle, ultrasound each of their 15 heifers and fed their feeder steers and sold them two days before I left in mid-June. We treated lame cows and calves on two of their farms, by darting them with anti-inflammatory and sometimes antibiotic filled darts. We also saved Sundays for any emergency calls, but while I was there, we did not have any calls, which she said was dependent on the time of year. The two months before I got there, she was getting three to four emergency calls almost every day of the week due to calving season, lameness, sickness or a number of other problems that farmers face with cattle. The heat and end of calving season meant less calls and less work during the summer months.
Was this a valuable experience? This was a very valuable experience for me. I enjoyed the experience of working with a completely beef cattle veterinarian and getting to learn and improve my palpation skills, vaccination, stockyard work (which I never really experienced from the vet side) and large herd work on farms meeting some pretty interesting people. This is something that I would have never had the chance to do, and I would love to have the chance to do it all again, learning more about cattle and working cattle from a veterinary perspective.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle? This experience was very important for me. After I graduate, I want to move back home and work with cattle herds in the area. To be able to have this experience was something that I would not have been able to get elsewhere. The work is similar to what I would experience on a daily and seasonal basis in the area.

What did you like most about cattle practice? What I liked most about the cattle practice was the variety of experiences that I got to participate in during my monthlong externship. I worked at stockyards, big farms and small farms. I got to brand cattle, vaccinate herds, castrate calves, treat pinkeye, pregnancy check, ear tag, put in growth implants, perform bull semen checks, and so much more that had had done before this experience, but nothing to this scale.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option? I will definitely consider cattle practice as a career option. I have worked with cattle before, from a farmer’s perspective, and learned a lot from those experiences. However, this experience let me see the veterinarian perspective of cattle work. I learned that there is so much more to cattle work than what I thought and had so much fun doing the work that I wanted to continue working after all the cattle were gone. This experience helped solidify my desire to become a cattle veterinarian.

Below is a summary of what I did on a weekly basis during my experience:

We started out at Blue Grass Stockyards-Lexington. She and her two main employees work Mondays and Tuesdays each and every week. While there, we processed cattle that were bought by clients of Dr. Dawn’s. Different vaccines and procedures were followed for different buyers and cattle that came through the working facility. The majority of cattle were ear tagged (different colors for different buyers), fly tagged, vaccinated for black leg, pinkeye, mycoplasma, IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV, dosed with a dewormer, and most bulls were banded, although for one particular buyer, the bulls were cut. Some Holstein calves that came through were branded with a variety of brands depending on owner preference. We also dehorned every animal that came through the hydraulic chute by wrapping a castration band around the horns, using hedge trimmers to cut the horns, cotton to fill any holes, and then cauterizing to stop blood flow. One day we pulled a live bull calf from a halter that had been in labor for about three days according to the owner. On palpation the heifer was dilated, but not completely, plus the calf was really big (about 115 pounds when we pulled him out). It took a lot of work and time but eventually we got the calf out.

Finally, the biggest thing that we did at this stockyard is pregnancy-checking heifers for them to be sold guaranteed open. If they were bred they were sold in a different lot. Not only were they checked to see whether they were pregnant to be sold, but some were pregnancy-checked once they were bought. Also, some of the older cows were checked to give the buyers an ideal of pregnancy status before buying.

The second stockyard that we worked at was Blue Grass Stockyards-East (in Mt. Sterling). We worked there on Wednesdays and Saturdays and did very similar procedures here that we did in Lexington. However, here there was much more pregnancy-checking on cattle before they were bought. More of the younger bulls were banded, while older bulls were cut. We tried using ultrasound, however, due to time constraints and little practice time, it was rarely used. One particular new procedure that was done at Mt. Sterling that was not done in Lexington was semen checks in bulls. We used an electroejaculator inserted into the rectum of the bull, we trimmed the hair off of the sheath, measured scrotal circumference, collected a semen sample and observed the semen on a slide under a microscope. With the microscope we looked for motility and concentration. If the bull passed that test, then we stained the slide and observed again to see if the sperm had any tails without heads, crooked tails, cytoplasmic droplets, and any other abnormalities. Based on age of the bull and using all our measurements the bull was either given a green tag for passing the semen check or a red tag for failing the check and sent to the sale ring. On the cows that were pregnancy checked before being sold, a special metal ear tag was placed in their left ear. This was to certify the cow came from, so the State of Kentucky could keep an eye on a disease, like TB, brucellosis, or Johne’s could be tracked so the state could keep its certification for being a TB-, brucellosis- and Johne’s-free state.

We did farm calls on Thursdays and Fridays to work cattle herds of around 150 or more head per farm. The first two weeks we did two calls a day, which took most of the day. The last two weeks we only did one call a day because the temperatures were so hot that we did not want to stress out the cattle and cause problems. We did the same procedures at the farms that we did at the stockyards, only with varying degrees of “safe” and “efficient” working facilities. For one client, we dewormed, fly tagged, put a Ralgro® implant in the cattle’s ear, and treated any pinkeye problems. We treated more than 322 head for this one client. For another client, his whole family (him, his two brothers and his cousin), each owned about 150 Holstein calves, which were vaccinated for black leg, pinkeye, mycoplasma, and IBR, BRSV, BVD, and PI3, complex. Sometimes we branded the different herds with a specific brand that the owners chose in order to keep the cattle separated by ownership. These were all younger male calves, so we banded them. Many farms wanted us to pregnancy-check their herd of cows to see about when they would calve and how their bulls did during the breeding season. We also did semen checks on bulls before they were placed into breeding groups or taken to the stockyards.

Sundays and afternoons were for working on Dr. Dawn’s and her husband’s farms. We fed cattle, ultrasoundled their 15 heifers and fed their feeder steers and sold them two days before I left in mid-June. We treated lame cows and calves on both of their farms, by darting them with anti-inflammatory and sometimes antibiotic filled darts. We also saw Souds for any emergency calls, but while I was there, we did not have any calls, which she said was dependent on the time of year. The two months before I got there, she was getting three to four emergency calls almost every day of the week due to calving season, lameness, sickness or a number of other problems that farmers face with cattle. The heat and end of calving season meant less calls and less work during the summer months.
COURTNEY SHERMAN
University of Tennessee
Fayetteville Animal Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
It was a phenomenal experience. The practice had four large-animal veterinarians, and what a diverse group they were. The opportunities were endless, and the doctors let me try anything with which I felt comfortable. It also was a change for me to be a part of a practice in which there were two stockyards within a few miles of the clinic, which allowed me to see that side of veterinary medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
For me personally, it is extremely important to have a great deal of cattle exposure. Having not grown up with cattle, I at times have felt behind the eight ball, so to speak, but opportunities like this have made me more confident in my abilities.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I really enjoyed everything from routine pregnancy diagnosis, herd work and disease within the herd to the emergency dystocia and C-section.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
This experience absolutely solidified that I will pursue a cattle practice as a career option. I may start my own mobile practice in my hometown, where there are approximately 40,000 head of cattle in the county without a food-animal veterinarian within 30 to 45 minutes in any direction.

CHRISTINE SHIELDS
Texas A&M University
Cross Timers Animal Hospital

Was this a valuable experience?
My experience at Cross Timers far exceeded any expectations I could have had. In only three weeks’ time I not only fortified what I learned in my first year in vet school but I also greatly expanded my knowledge of veterinary medicine and really improved my technical skills. Hosting students (especially first years) takes a lot of extra time and effort out of the doctor’s and technician’s day, but the staff at Cross Timbers was incredible. They were patient with me and really engaged and challenged me with every case that walked in the door. On a non-medical note, the hospitality in Bowie, Texas, was above and beyond. They treated me like family and made my stay there so enjoyable.

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What did you like most about cattle practice?
The things I enjoy most about cattle practice are getting to work outside, developing relationships with ranches and having an impact on beef consumers everywhere. Through relationships with and guidance of beef production operations, bovine practitioners are putting safe and healthy beef on our tables, which I think is the most important and amazing part of the job.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I have always considered cattle production medicine as a career option, and this opportunity only strengthened that notion. I am thankful to have experienced the day-to-day life of a rural practice that performs a lot of cattle medicine. I will definitely draw from my experiences at Cross Timbers for the rest of my career.
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This was a very valuable experience for me. The three vets that work at the practice were all very knowledgeable and gave me lots of helpful tips and advice about how to proceed with my career when I get out of school. I believe it is very important to have cattle exposure especially if you plan to practice in the food-animal field. At Bear Paw, I was allowed to perform hands-on medical procedures and learn different cattle handling techniques that will benefit me in the future. One of the things I like the most about cattle practice is the sense of community surrounding a large-animal practice. By helping your clients, you are helping the community, and I thought it was wonderful watching how the client/doctor relationship can grow and such meeting of the minds can result increased productive for the ranch as well as the vet. My least favorable thing about a cattle practice was some of the low prices charged for your time and services, but at the same time I understand it. Before this experience, I was leaning toward the cattle industry as a career option and now I am convinced that is my calling. Thank you for providing me with such an amazing opportunity to learn and grow from this experience.

HOLLY SLATER
Oklahoma State University

Bear Paw Veterinary Service

“Before this experience, I was leaning toward the cattle industry as a career option and now I am convinced that is my calling.”

The reason I pursued vet school is rooted in my reverence for farmers and my fascination with cows. I particularly enjoy dairy cattle, so it was a given that the two dairies we visited were two of my favorite aspects of my experience in Oklahoma. I grew up with a free-stall dairy and have visited numerous grazing dairies, but I had never seen a dry-lot dairy — very exciting for me. I also realized that I truly love palpating cows and have a strong desire excel at preg-checking. It’s amazing to me that veterinarians are so accurately able to predict the age of a vesicle or fetus. I also enjoyed consulting at the feedlots and was able to observe the veterinarian’s role in that sector of the beef industry for the first time.

Even though I have no desire to practice medicine unless I can work with farmers and food-animals, I have a few fears related to pursuing this occupation, especially balancing my job and my family life, being accepted as a female food-animal practitioner, and the possibility of being seriously injured on the job. Working with Dr. Prather answered about two-and-a-half of my fears. First, he reassured me that rural clients know that family comes first. Clients were rarely offended if they called him in for an emergency and he told them they were going to have to wait an hour because he was attending an important event for his children or his church. He was also very safe and had standards of safety that I had to meet for almost every patient we treated. The only fear he could not settle was my fear as being accepted as a female practitioner. Honestly, I know that my small stature and relative physical weakness compared with my male counterparts is a challenge I must find a way to overcome. But I think that traveling with a male assistant or using my creativity to modify some of my tools may be sufficient to compensate for my shortcomings.

I hope the Pfizer Animal Health externship program is able to endure far into the future.

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DUSTI SMALL
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Ellis County Animal Hospital

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My experience at Stockman’s was extremely valuable. The staff was sincerely interested in giving me the best experience, and the clients were also accommodating with their patience and livestock. While I have had exposure to cattle from growing up on a farm/ranch, it was very important to me to see the interaction from the side of the veterinarian as opposed to the producer’s perspective. There are two things that I like most about cattle practice: first, the idea of population medicine is a concept that I am fascinated by in terms of cattle, pigs, sheep or even humans; and, secondly, I love the people who work with cattle. In the words of Dr. Dee Griffin from Clay Center, Neb., “I like cows, I like people who raise cattle, I like people who work on cattle, and I like people who consume cattle.” That simply summarizes the way I feel about the cattle industry and the people involved.

So after looking at the picture I posted, you are probably wondering what these boots have to do with my externship experience. Well, these were the boots that I wore most of the time while I was in North Platte, and while I didn’t have any pictures of my experiences there, I took this picture about a week ago and sent it back to the clinic per their request. As I’ve stated earlier, the staff at Stockman’s really took me under their wing and literally treated me as if I were part of the Stockman’s family. Which brings me to the picture: What you can’t see from this picture is the extensive “bedazzle” job the staff did on my boots. Joking and pranks, when appropriate, were part of what made my experience so fun. The “bedazzle” job was the precipice of my stay. After forgetting my boots on the last day of my externship, I returned a week later and picked up my newly decorated boots. With a row of rare gems down the anterior and posterior sides of my boots with my initials written in rhinestones on the lateral aspects, I knew they had pulled a great prank. Out of respect of their showmanship, I couldn’t bring myself to remove the beads and instead left them to help remember how much fun I had while in North Platte. Sadly, the rest of the summer irrigating on the family farm/ranch had taken its toll on their work of art, but they assured me they would do warranty work should I ever pass through North Platte again. I included this story because I think it accurately demonstrates the reason I wish to practice bovine medicine upon graduation, and that is because of the people and relationships that one forges in the beef industry. Thank you Pfizer Animal Health for the opportunity and to Stockman’s for being so accommodating.
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While I have had exposure to cattle from growing up on a farm/ranch, it was very important to me to see the interaction from the side of the veterinarian as opposed to the producer’s perspective.

Was this a valuable experience?
This experience was definitely a valuable experience. I gained more experience with different bovine vaccination protocols, chute safety, routine procedures and surgery.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was incredibly important to apply our classroom knowledge to practical, real-world veterinary medicine and gain more experience in the safe handling of cattle of different temperaments as well as hands-on experience with live animals.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked the most about cattle practice besides the hands-on experience was interacting with producers and learning more about their production settings. After this experience, I definitely feel more confident in discussing treatment protocols and gaining the trust of my clients.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
This experience definitely affirmed my decision to be involved in cattle medicine following graduation and gave me more confidence in the various aspects of cattle practice and interacting with cattle clients.
Was this a valuable experience?

Absolutely. I learn best by immersing myself in opportunities for practical experience, and this is one of the best such opportunities that I have had. Based on my skills and past experience, I was able to participate a lot in the calls we went out on. Also, in addition to cattle, there was a smattering of nearly all other domestic species, so it was a great opportunity to have a taste of mixed practice as well.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

I have been exposed to cattle a lot in an academic setting both in undergrad and in vet school. What I had not been exposed to enough was working with cattle in a clinical setting. Talking with producers about their herds and individual animals and then actually going out to see the animals was a new experience for me. In addition, it was very interesting to see how Drs. McCall and Hussman utilized what they had available to restrain animals for procedures. Dr. McCall often used a blowgun to sedate cattle for procedures, which is something I had never seen done before.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

I really enjoyed being outside, at least when it wasn’t 100 degrees (which it definitely was several days of the externship). I enjoyed speaking with producers about their herds and their individual animals as well. Dr. McCall is very social with her clients, so I was able to learn a lot about them.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

I am interesting in working with cattle in my practice, though I do not want to practice with cattle solely. Dr. McCall and Dr. Hussman work with cattle primarily and yet they still work a great deal with goats, alpacas, swine and even the occasional cat, dog, or pot-bellied pig. I do like the variety because it keeps things interesting. What this experience really did for me was to give me a better feel for what country practice is like. I am happy that I had no misgivings about it and that I was able to work pretty well in the environment. I was invited back for a fourth-year clerkship if I would like. I think I definitely would like to, but probably during another season of the year when the types of calls would be different.
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**CHRIS VANDERHOOF**  
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine  
Louisa Farm Veterinary Service

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**ALLISON VIGNES**  
Louisiana State University  
Scarlett Mobile Large Animal Services

This experience of working with Scarlett Mobile Large Animal Services was one of the most valuable experiences I think I will have throughout my career in veterinary school. It helped teach some of the basic skills required for large-animal practice. You can only learn so much from books about what it takes to be a large-animal veterinarian. No one can teach you the skills of hard work, how to talk to clients, and time management skills like the actual exciting field work that large-animal veterinarians partake in every day. With never growing up on a farm or around cattle, this externship was the perfect opportunity for me to get hands-on experience working with cattle. In Louisiana, it can be pretty difficult to find veterinarians close enough or with enough volume to be conducive to learning. Dr. Scarlett is a great mentor and taught me so much in the short amount of time I was with the practice. I will be able to take these skills I learned and use them in the future to become a better bovine veterinarian.

I loved the whole experience of cattle practice. Working outdoors, driving to farm calls, ambulatory work and working with the farmers to increase profits are just a few of the reasons I plan on continuing with cattle practice. I am not sure I can really name one particular thing I don’t like about cattle practice. Some of the minor drawbacks would be weekend work and late hours, but I know that when you are doing something you love, those issues seem minor when you are able to save an animal’s life. After this experience, it only confirmed my desire to work with large animals, and specifically bovine, in the future. It also helped me in determining the state and area I would like to work in when I graduate. Without financial assistance, it would have been very difficult for me to make such a long trip. I appreciate all the hard work that goes into making this opportunity available to veterinary students. I cannot express how much this experience truly meant to me and my future as a bovine practitioner. I plan on sharing with my fellow colleagues the importance of getting experience in all areas of interest, because you never know if you could change your mind.
HANNAH WADSWORTH  
Oklahoma State University

Nebraska Veterinary Services

I consider the time I spent at Nebraska Veterinary Services this summer a valuable experience. The hands-on experience that I gained on the externship will continue to benefit me throughout my veterinary career. It was my goal to be exposed to as many different aspects of bovine veterinary medicine as possible, and I believe this goal was achieved. The practice that I visited was comprised of five veterinarians on site and one more veterinarian located about 20 miles away. In West Point, each vet specialized in something different, including feedlot consulting, dairy medicine, swine production, small animal/hood animal and business manager. As you can imagine, the opportunities that I had varied from day to day. Most of my background has been in cow-calf management in east-central Oklahoma, so the experiences I had with dairy and feedlot practice were quite new to me. On a typical day I would ride with either the dairy vet or the feedlot consultant. Dairy days were lots of fun. We would leave the clinic at 4 a.m. and travel for an hour-and-a-half to palpate cows at 6 a.m. I would follow behind the vet and pregnancy check. I first learned how to recognize open structures, then was allowed to palpate pregnant cows. I really enjoyed the dairies. The dairy vet also did some embryo transfer work, which I found fascinating. Feedlot consulting was an entirely different experience and mostly consisted of driving through the feedlot and evaluating cattle, pens, feeding practices, etc. I had the opportunity to ride pens with the vet one day, and it really helped me to understand feedlot medicine a lot better. I was able to attend several lunch meetings at feedlots. One day we sat in on a safety meeting and another time the vet presented a BQA certification meeting. I worked some with the small-animal vet when time would allow. It was a good way to reinforce some of the ideas that had been presented to me in school, and exposed me to a few others that I will learn about soon. When he was not seeing small animal patients, the vet would be called to perform preg checks on incoming feedlot heifers. I was able to accompany him on many of these visits and got to see firsthand what processing 80 to 100 feedlot heifers was like. I did not work with the swine vet or business manager much, as my interest was more in dairies and feedlots. My very favorite part about cattle practice is the people you get to work with. For the most part, farmers and ranchers are good, hard-working, down-to-earth folks. I enjoy farm calls and visiting with cattle owners about their livestock and how to prevent/cure diseases. My least favorite part of cattle practice is the working hours that are currently considered as standard. As an aspiring food-animal veterinarian and future wife and mother, I easily see a conflict arising between the hours and time demands of being a vet vs. caring for a family. Taking all this into consideration, though, I had a great experience in Nebraska. The time I spent there only served to solidify my goals to be work in a cattle practice some day. I am very grateful to Pfizer Animal Health for allowing me the opportunity to learn more about the profession I have chosen.

DANIEL WELDON  
Auburn University

Okeechobee Veterinary Hospital

Was this a valuable experience?

I can say without a doubt that this externship was an extremely meaningful learning experience. The externship grant from Pfizer Animal Health made it possible for me to spend five weeks in a very progressive veterinary practice located in the heart of cattle country in Okeechobee, Fla. The primary reason I chose to go to this practice was the large volume of cattle work that the veterinarians in this practice are engaged in on a daily basis. This practice provides services for several of the largest cow/calf operations in the nation. I was extremely fortunate throughout this experience to be shadowing two veterinarians who are both very skilled in their profession and eager to share their knowledge. Throughout my time in South Florida I saw a wide variety of cattle operations, from very large scale operations to smaller herds, and I gained a tremendous amount of hands on experience in food-animal medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

I have spent a significant amount of time around cattle and handling cattle growing up. However, prior to this experience I had never been exposed to the large volume of cattle work on this scale. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was an extremely beneficial learning experience to see production systems in another part of the country. I learned every day, and I can say that this experience will help make me more proficient in my chosen career path.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

I enjoyed being able to make a difference in production agriculture on a daily basis. While I enjoyed palpating cows and vaccinating heifers, etc., I found some of the most valuable learning opportunities of this experience to be in dealing with people. I learned a lot about client communication and how important it as a veterinarian to be able to communicate effectively with people. The veterinarians in this practice do an extremely good job with this, and they provided a good model for a student in my situation.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Large-animal medicine is why I chose veterinary medicine as a career path. I would like to thank Pfizer Animal Health again for making this grant possible. I believe this is a very valuable service to allow students to step outside the classroom and experience a new and unique learning opportunity such as an externship. I also want to thank Dr. Jim Harvey, Dr. Chance Armstrong, Dr. Paul Bryant and the staff at Okeechobee Veterinary Hospital for this opportunity.
**HANNAH WADSWORTH**  
Oklahoma State University

Nebraska Veterinary Services

I consider the time I spent at Nebraska Veterinary Services this summer a valuable experience. The hands-on experience that I gained on the externship will continue to benefit me throughout my veterinary career. It was my goal to be exposed to as many different aspects of bovine veterinary medicine as possible, and I believe this goal was achieved. The practice that I visited was comprised of five veterinarians on site and one more veterinarian located about 20 miles away. In West Point, each vet specialized in something different, including feedlot consulting, dairy medicine, swine production, small animal/food animal and business manager. As you can imagine, the opportunities that I had varied from day to day. Most of my background has been in cow-calf management in east-central Oklahoma, so the experiences I had with dairy and feedlot practice were quite new to me. On a typical day I would ride with either the dairy vet or the feedlot consultant. Dairy days were lots of fun. We would leave the clinic at 4 a.m. and travel for an hour-and-a-half to be palpating cows at 6 a.m. I would follow behind the vet and pregnancy check. I first learned how to recognize open structures, then was allowed to palpate pregnant cows. I really enjoyed the dairies. The dairy vet also did some embryo transfer work, which I found fascinating. Feedlot consulting was an entirely different experience and mostly consisted of driving through the feedlot and evaluating cattle, pens, feeding practices, etc. I had the opportunity to ride pens with the vet one day, and it really helped me to understand feedlot medicine a lot better. I was able to attend several lunch meetings at feedlots. One day we sat in on a safety meeting and another time the vet presented a BQA certification meeting. I worked some with the small-animal vet when time would allow. It was a good way to reinforce some of the ideas that had been presented to me in school, and exposed me to a few others that I will learn about soon. When he was not seeing small animal patients, the vet would be called to perform preg checks on incoming feedlot heifers. I was able to accompany him on many of these visits and got to see firsthand what processing 80 to 100 feedlot heifers was like. I did not work with the swine vet or business manager much, as my interest was more in dairies and feedlots. My very favorite part about cattle practice is the people you get to work with. For the most part, farmers and ranchers are good, hard-working, down-to-earth folks. I enjoy farm calls and visiting with cattle owners about their livestock and how to prevent/cure diseases. My least favorite part of cattle practice is the working hours that are currently considered as standard. As an aspiring food-animal veterinarian and future wife and mother, I easily see a conflict arising between the hours and time demands of being a vet vs. caring for a family. Taking all this into consideration, though, I had a great experience in Nebraska. The time I spent there only served to solidify my goals to be work in a cattle practice some day. I am very grateful to Pfizer Animal Health for allowing me the opportunity to learn more about the profession I have chosen.

**DANIEL WELDON**  
Auburn University

Okeechobee Veterinary Hospital

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"Was this a valuable experience?"

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"What did you like most about cattle practice?"

"After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?"
Before this externship, I wanted to pursue a career in cattle, and this summer has enforced that desire many times over.

This experience was extremely valuable, not only in the aspect of gaining more practical veterinary skills but also learning more about how the business side of being a vet. I had some cattle experience from undergrad, but to be able to go to Texas and use a learn and use a more clinical skill set rather than just a management approach gave a greater insight into what large-animal practice has to offer. There were so many things that I enjoyed about cattle practice that it is hard to narrow it down; the different procedures that I was able to learn and perform added a lot of variety to each day. Between the palpation and tail bleeds at the sale barn, dehorning and bull testing, there was never a dull moment. The clients that we worked with also made a great difference; they were all so down-to-earth and appreciative for the work we did and the knowledge base that we brought, it really made the work enjoyable. I don’t know if there was anything that I would say I didn’t like about the cattle practice, maybe the days that the caseload was a little less, maybe, but everything else I really enjoyed. The time spent in Texas this summer was one of the best months spent in my life. I had a lot of fun and learned so much not only about veterinary medicine but about life as well. Before this externship, I wanted to pursue a career in cattle, and this summer has enforced that desire many times over. I hope that as I continue through veterinary school I can put myself to be in the place to practice bovine medicine when I graduate.

Nicholas White
University of Florida

South Texas Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
Yes, this was an extremely valuable experience. I went into this hoping to not only expand my experience with cattle (which I definitely did) but also to learn more specifically about milk quality and the mastitis lab that Rocky Creek has. I am fairly local to Rocky Creek, so I know how many of the dairy and beef operations operate, but it was very interesting to learn from a different veterinarian on how he does many of the day-to-day tasks of a bovine veterinarian (i.e., pregnancy checking, displaced abomasum surgery, etc.). It was also an awesome experience because not only did I learn a lot about milk quality and their lab but I also learned about a type of beef cow I had absolutely no experience with. . . . bucking bulls. I had no idea that Dr. Sanner (the vet I worked with) had bucking bull clients, so this opened my eyes to a whole new aspect of veterinary medicine I had not experienced yet in bovine medicine. And even though I have no plans on entering into a bucking bull exclusive veterinary practice, it still was an awesome experience in and of itself. I want to have as many tools in my arsenal when I graduate as possible, and this externship was an easy way for me to pick up many different tools from a young and successful veterinarian. Dr. Sanner is a recent graduate of Virginia-Maryland who is up-to-date with current bovine practices in the Southeast, and besides the fact that he is a fun guy to be around, he was a fantastic teacher. I would recommend this experience to anyone interested in learning about bovine medicine.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Growing up on a farm, I have a good deal of cattle experience, so the experience itself (minus the bucking bulls) was not anything particularly new; it was just the ability for me to expand on my ever-growing knowledge of cattle and the bovine industry as a whole from a different veterinarian than the one I am used to. Being able to do that made this experience worth it all.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
There is not a whole lot about cows that I do not like, but by far my top pick is dairy cows and palpation. I am the co-captain of N.C. State’s Palpation Team, and it is something that I really enjoy (as weird as that is). I definitely enjoy theriogenology, which is probably why palpation interests me so much, but honestly I really just enjoy dairy cows in general, too; the lameness issues, the nutrition, the overall atmosphere of the clients, etc. I plan to go into a predominantly (hopefully all) bovine practice, and every chance I get, I get outside of the school building and work with cows.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Not only have I considered a bovine medicine career but it is my plan. I hope to do mainly dairy because I enjoy palpating and working on lame cows and analyzing milking facilities, but like most veterinarians say, I will do whatever comes through the door I suppose (but dairy is my first choice).

Gregory Whitener
North Carolina State University

Was this a valuable experience?
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After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
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GREGORY WHITENER
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Rocky Creek Veterinary Service

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What did you like most about cattle practice?
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After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
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I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to Pfizer Animal Health for making my summer externship possible. I had an amazing time and gained invaluable experience in the cattle industry!

I began with two weeks at the Overton Veterinary Clinic in Overton, Neb. This is primarily a feedlot practice and services several large feedlots with thousands of cattle. I was extremely fortunate to get to work with five amazing practitioners and was definitely encouraged to “get my hands dirty.” I gained significant experience in safe cattle handling, vaccination and parasite prevention protocols, feedlot management, nutrition, obstetrics, surgery, AI, palpation, pregnancy checks/ultrasounding and calf processing. I was even invited to tour the local Tyson meat-packing plant to learn more about the fate of healthy beef cattle.

The last half of June was spent at the Sugar Factory Veterinary Clinic in Hardin, Mont., to focus on cow-calf operations and reproductive management. Here I was able to gain further understanding of bull handling and semen testing. Each bull was submitted to probe ejaculation and certified for semen count and quality; tissue samples were also taken from each breeding bull for trichomoniasis testing. The associated ear-tagging, paperwork and record-keeping were also emphasized. My favorite activity was participating in an “old-fashioned calf branding,” which turned out to be a community event. The calves were roped and dragged on horseback, then wrangled while being quickly branded, tagged, vaccinated and castrated. It was wonderful to see how closely the vets and farmers were working together and having a great time.

Both practices also offered an additional amount of experience with equine and small-animal work. Many of the feedlots relied on horses for cattle movement, as well as cattle dogs for herding and protection. My favorite part of the externship was learning how the “farm practices” operate and seeing how integrated the veterinarians were with the entire agricultural system and associated clients.

My summer externship has reinforced my desire to include cattle practice in my career goals. I remain dedicated to directing my medical skills toward the benefit of the agricultural economy and our nation’s food supply. I am even more motivated to include cattle services in my veterinary career.

I remain dedicated to directing my medical skills toward the benefit of the agricultural economy and our nation’s food supply.

Overton Veterinary Clinic, Sugar Factory Veterinary Clinic

ESTHER WILLIAMS
University of Georgia

Was this a valuable experience?
Yes, I learned a lot about bovine, and it was great when the clinicians quizzed me, quite like when I will be in clinics.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It is very important to be exposed to cattle. I knew almost nothing before this externship, but now I feel I could actually, competently, work with cattle and cattle people.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I liked the people and the cows. I never thought of them each having their own personalities, and the people that care for the cows were always interesting and friendly.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I would definitely consider adding bovine practice, but I am looking more toward mixed practice because I like the variety.

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MISTY WILLIAMS
Michigan State University

Sterner Veterinary Clinic

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I knew almost nothing before this externship, but now I feel I could actually, competently, work with cattle and cattle people.”
Was this a valuable experience?
This was a very valuable experience. I was given the opportunity to get hands-on experience the moment I walked in the door at New Salem Veterinary Clinic. I assisted with two caesarian sections on two beef cows and even got to put in the skin sutures on the second C-section. I went on a farm call to a dairy farm where we used an ultrasound machine and rectal palpation to diagnose pregnancies in about 75 dairy cows. I got to help with calf scours and coccidiosis cases in beef calves and even got to place the IV catheter and do all the treatments in one calf. I also was involved with many breeding soundness exams with a large number of bulls that came through the clinic. These are just some of the experiences I was involved with while I was at the clinic.

Missouri Valley Veterinary Clinic let me help with everything cattle related as well. I helped with vaccinations, semen testing of bulls, hoof trimming, dehorning, banding of bull calves and some reproductive work in beef cattle and dairy cattle. I also was able to help do an LDA surgery on a dairy cow. The experience at this clinic was also very valuable and made me realize that many of the same cases can be handled in many different ways, depending on the practitioner.

This experience was very valuable because it opened my eyes to many cattle related issues that are a part of everyday practice in many veterinary clinics. It also made me aware of the fact that being a large-animal veterinary is not always an easy job and usually involves a lot of physical labor, hard work and a lot of long days and even nights when on call. It also made me realize that it is a very rewarding job and a job that earns you a lot of respect from many cattle producers.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Growing up on a farm allowed me to become exposed to cattle; however, this experience gave me an opportunity to become exposed to cattle in a different way. This experience gave me an opportunity to become exposed to cattle in a different way. It made me aware of how important handling facilities are as well as how different cattle can act when taken out of their normal environment. The hands-on experience has helped me become more comfortable and confident when working with cattle in a veterinary related environment.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I definitely liked the variety and flexibility when it came to seeing different cases. Every case was different and involved different techniques, skills and knowledge in order to make the best diagnosis. I also liked interacting and working with clients. Being able to communicate and having a good relationship with clients is crucial to the success of you as a practitioner.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Definitely! Cattle have always been a part of my life and I plan to keep them as a part of my life. This experience has helped me move toward my goals of becoming a food-animal veterinarian. Thank you for giving me this opportunity!

JAYME WILKENS
Kansas State University
New Salem Veterinary Clinic, Missouri Valley Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
The Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship program provided me with such a valuable experience and one that I will never forget. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work in a rural clinic with two wonderful veterinarians who are so willing to teach students.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
It was very important for me to get exposed to cattle in a clinical setting. Having grown up around cattle, I was always comfortable with them, but I needed to gain more confidence in my clinical skills in a bovine practice, and this program allowed me to do just that. I feel that in four short weeks I gained the confidence I was looking for and am on the path to becoming a large-animal practitioner.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked most about cattle practice was working with the people who own cattle. I can relate well to people who own production livestock and this is my favorite part of my chosen field.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After this experience I will, without a doubt, pursue cattle practice as a career option. This program served to confirm my choice of becoming a large-animal practitioner. Thank you, Pfizer Animal Health, for this opportunity, and thank you to Dr. Mike Nichols for helping me find a clinic that matched my interests.

AMANDA WILSON
Oklahoma State University
Dimmitt Veterinary Clinic
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It was very important for me to get exposed to cattle in a clinical setting. Having grown up around cattle, I was always comfortable with them, but I needed to gain more confidence in my clinical skills in a bovine practice, and this program allowed me to do just that. I feel that in four short weeks I gained the confidence I was looking for and am on the path to becoming a large-animal practitioner.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
What I liked most about cattle practice was working with the people who own cattle. I can relate well to people who own production livestock and this is my favorite part of my chosen field.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After this experience I will, without a doubt, pursue cattle practice as a career option. This program served to confirm my choice of becoming a large-animal practitioner. Thank you, Pfizer Animal Health, for this opportunity, and thank you to Dr. Mike Nichols for helping me find a clinic that matched my interests.

AMANDA WILSON
Oklahoma State University
Dimmitt Veterinary Clinic

“...I feel that in four short weeks I gained the confidence I was looking for and am on the path to becoming a large-animal practitioner.”
I started my experience at Elgin Veterinary Clinic on May 31. I knew that the clinic was a well-established veterinary clinic, and I was looking forward to being at one of the best specialty clinics for food-animal medicine in the state of Texas. The first thing that I liked about the clinic was the wide array of equipment available to the technicians and practitioners. This made treating every case brought into the clinic possible. The one piece unique piece of equipment I liked was the hydraulic table. At the other practices I worked at, we never had this table. I loved having the ability to put these huge animals on their side with a great amount of restraint. Since we had these facilities, we were able to see and treat complicated cases.

The large numbers of clients was another factor that I enjoyed. Since they have so many clients coming through the clinic, I experienced many different types of cases. Everything from a simple hoof trim to a hernia surgery came through in just one day. During my time at Elgin, I saw several interesting cases. A lot of these cases were lameness cases. Although I am far from being an expert, I learned how to work up each case and what to look for. Since all these cases were unique, I learned a good deal about the treatment of each one.

One thing I like about veterinary medicine is theriogenology. While at Elgin, I assisted in many breeding soundness exams (BSE). I’m now able to confidently perform all aspects of the BSE exam. I was also able to palpate cows and I even had the opportunity to artificially inseminate several heifers.

One case that I particularly liked was a Red Brahman bull that came in with an enlarged abdomen. The bull was about 2 years old and had a huge pendulous abdomen. When Dr. Warner started to perform a standing laparotomy, large amounts of urine poured out of the patient. That immediately drew our attention to the bull’s bladder. There we found several holes through the bladder. They appeared to be cysts that had ruptured causing urine to leak out into the abdomen. The bladder was repaired and we closed up the patient. We kept the patient there for post-operative antibiotics and observation. Two days after the laparotomy, the bull’s abdomen was again pendulous and filled with urine. We immediately put the bull into a chute and performed another standing laparotomy. We pulled out the bladder and verified that the sutures we placed during the first surgery were intact. As we pulled the bladder farther from the abdomen, we saw another large hole that penetrated the wall of the bladder. Unlike the holes found before, this did not look like a cyst and was a bit larger. We determined that the bull had a patent urachus. We repaired the bladder a second time and the bull went home a week later. This bull taught me just because you don’t get it right the first time doesn’t mean you are a bad veterinarian. Its showing persistence and dedication to finding a problem and a solution that make the difference.

This summer was a great experience that has helped me further my career as a bovine veterinarian. I no longer doubt my abilities and feel like I have done nothing but improved myself. My newfound confidence will help carry me throughout the rest of my schooling and into my career. I would like to thank everyone at Pfizer Animal Health for giving me this opportunity. Without this scholarship, these externships would have not have been possible. Thank you.

I think this was a valuable experience because being with a veterinarian one-on-one in the field provided much more hands-on experience than I have been able to gain thus far in veterinary school. Being exposed to cattle was important because I would like to do cattle as part of my practice after graduation. So, although I had worked with cattle before, this experience provided me the opportunity to expand my knowledge of them. I enjoy working around cattle because I grew up around them and am thus comfortable working with them. In working with cattle, I enjoy the opportunity to continue to be a part of the agricultural industry and doing what I can to help the farmer make a profit and produce the best product possible. One drawback to working with cattle is that it tends to be much more physically demanding than some other areas of veterinary medicine, and it can involve a lot of travel time.

I enjoy the opportunity to continue to be a part of the agricultural industry and doing what I can to help the farmer make a profit and produce the best product possible.

Sadie Zapalac
Texas A&M University

Elgin Veterinary Clinic

Reid Zehr
University of Illinois

South County Veterinary Service
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JASON ZWILLING
University of Illinois

Food Animal Veterinary Service

I had a wonderful experience at the Food Animal Veterinary Service. The clinic consists of four full-time and one part-time veterinarian. During the four weeks of my externship, the practice was largely focused on cattle embryo transfer service. Two of the vets have facilities to house and work donor cows on their properties and were almost exclusively involved in embryo transfer activities. Looking back on the experience, there wasn’t a day that I wasn’t involved in some type of embryo transfer work. This is one of my primary interests, and I was able to learn a great amount of knowledge.

Was this a valuable experience?
Most definitely, as a mentioned earlier I am really interesting in combining embryo transfer with bovine practice. I was able to be a useful help to the practice and involved myself in various steps of the ET process. I was able to assist in sorting dishes for fertilized embryos, “pick up” fertilized embryos and move them to new dishes. I was able to learn and then improve this skill during the time I was on my externship. The veterinarians were open to answering my questions on a variety of topics. They shared their experiences over the years and how the practice had evolved and what they planned for the future of the practice. I was also able make some connections with individuals in the beef industry.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Prior to the experience, I had quite a bit of general cattle production experience, however, I had little veterinary practice experience. I was able to interact with cattle in different handling facilities and management schemes, which is always helpful. The way the veterinarians interacted with clients and managed their schedules were areas that I felt I gained the most information. I have heard a variety of stories on veterinarian lifestyles in rural practices, however, being involved in the day-to-day activities of the clinic gave me new prospective. The veterinarians whom I worked with balanced family, community involvement and practice very effectively. The veterinarian who owns the practice encouraged the other vets to pursue their interests both in and beyond the practice. I was impressed with how proactive they were in determining their schedules; instead of reacting to what was called into the office, they adjusted to attempt to cover all the work in a certain geographical area on one day. In addition, the veterinarians communicated with each other almost daily to attempt to serve all their clients’ needs while not wasting time driving to an area multiple times a week. The veterinarians were tuned into the schedules of their primary clients and took the initiative to work with their personal schedule and that of their clients. Often this meant starting days early or working later than normal hours on a scheduled day. I think their flexibility was appreciated by their clients and helped the reputation of the practice. When working in the donor facilities, areas were set up for clients, friends and family members to relax and watch the procedures without being in the way of the veterinarians. The areas were low stress both for the livestock and the people coming in which I also feel maintained a good relationship with clients and help to create a positive image of the practice.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed interacting with the people as much as anything. Much like other geographical areas, conversations focused on rain, crops and cattle breeding. The basic personalities of clients were the same as other areas that I have been to. I felt I was able to interact with them appropriately and show interest in the producers’ operations. In most instances we were shown great hospitality on the farms. By offering ET and specifically transfers, I was amazed about how much additional business the practice did just by being on a farm already. While some of this additional projects slowed the day down many were able to be accomplished after a flush while the freezer was running. The producers where good about scheduling ET work to coincide with time when other cattle need palpated or calves worked, this was advantageous to the producer financially and from a time standpoint for the veterinarians.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I have always wanted to do some type of cattle work within a practice. However, this experience has shown me that a high percentage cattle practice is possible.

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I enjoyed interacting with the people as much as anything.
I would be extremely interested in using embryo transfer and advanced reproductive services to build a bovine practice around. I also think the experience helped my confidence to offer meaningful medical advice to clients.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
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The way the veterinarians interacted with clients and managed their schedules were areas that I felt I gained the most information.
Was this a valuable experience?

This has been one of the most valuable experiences that I have had thus far in veterinary school. We spend so much time during our veterinary school careers learning conceptually how to do things; it was wonderful to get a change to actually do them!

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

For me, it was important to get some exposure to cattle only because during the school year, I don’t have much time to get away from the city and actually work with cows. I grew up on a farm, so my comfort with and love for cows was already there.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

My favorite part of cattle practice was working with producers in order to come up with solutions to their problems. We didn’t just go on the farm and perform a DA surgery and leave; we talked with them about how we could prevent them in the future.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

Not only would I consider it, I definitely have come to the decision to follow the food-animal curriculum!
Was this a valuable experience?

I spent my externship driving through the beautiful mountains and valleys of northern Vermont and New Hampshire along with Dr. Andy Krause and Dr. Erin Nelson, who provide veterinary services to a wide variety of dairy farms, backyard livestock raisers and pet owners. I gained valuable exposure to everyday life as a rural practitioner in New England, which was precisely my reason for applying for this externship. I was able to observe and help with diagnoses, treatments and other techniques with which, as a student in a small-animal-focused student body, I have had limited experience.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?

Up until this point, I had been extremely interested in food animal practice, but with a lack of hands-on experience, I was intimidated by working with dairy cattle and farmer clients. Seeing the realities of this type of practice and interacting with these unique clients has made me much more confident in my decision to pursue a career in food-animal medicine.

What did you like most about cattle practice?

For me, the best part of working in cattle practice is the animals themselves. I have so much respect for cows and all they provide to humans, and I think they are well deserving of top-notch care. After the externship, I feel infinitely more comfortable working around cattle, and I enjoy so much their inquisitive but cautious nature and their quirky personalities. I enjoy the challenge of diagnosing and treating animals that can hide their illnesses so well, and I am drawn to a working environment outside of a traditional hospital setting. While I’m sure that I’ll come across more downsides to cattle practice, I have few complaints at this point. I can see myself becoming somewhat frustrated in not being able to fully pursue treatment or diagnostics that would be beyond economical limits. I do know, however, that cattle vets have always had to devise creative solutions for such issues, and I think I will enjoy the constant reinvention of traditional medicine and surgery to suit the needs of specific cows and farms.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?

This externship has strongly influenced me to pursue a career in cattle practice, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to reinforce my interests, develop my new skills, and learn so much about bovine medicine and life as a cattle practitioner.
Was this a valuable experience?
Getting the opportunity to participate in the Bovine Externship Program during the summer of 2011 was a very valuable and enjoyable experience for me.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
During my undergraduate education, I realized that large-animal medicine may be a possible career choice after veterinary school, but living in an area where farming and food animals are not particularly common, I have been somewhat limited in my ability to obtain an adequate amount of large-animal exposure. Therefore, programs like this allow me to achieve more exposure to cattle and bovine medicine, which are both very educational and important.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
During the four weeks at my host veterinary practice, I had the opportunity to accompany six different bovine veterinarians and a large-animal technician on all kinds of farm calls. I enjoyed seeing the different techniques and styles of the different individuals in the practice, and I consider myself lucky to have observed such a diverse group of veterinarians, including men and women as well as both newer and older graduates. One of the most important things that draws me to bovine medicine is the fact that cattle health and well-being plays an important role in society as we rely on these animals for many different resources.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
After participating in the Bovine Externship Program, the desire to continue my path toward bovine medicine and food animal veterinary medicine in general has grown stronger. Having the ability to spend four weeks at a cattle veterinary practice has been a very valuable experience as I had the opportunity to see firsthand the most common problems in dairy cattle in addition to practicing many different bovine procedure techniques. At this point in my education, I plan on pursuing as much bovine and other food-animal veterinary exposure as I can find in order to achieve my career goals.
This was perhaps my most valuable experience to date. It gave me the most comprehensive exposure to cattle, the industry and the people involved in cattle practice. I am certainly going to consider cattle practice as a career option.

I learned about the business and marketing aspects of cattle, factors that affected cattle prices and the importance of herd management. I got to tour and work at large feedlots and visited several packing plants. On top of that, I got an inside look at how to manage a veterinary clinic and a feedlot. The efficiency of these feedlots and packing plants amazed me. I have nothing but respect for the people involved in the industry.

I remember on one visit, I went out with one of the veterinarians to help preg-check cattle at a small ranch. When we got there, the cattle had already been gathered into a corral and were being pushed into the clinic’s mobile chute. My job was to record the results of the ultrasound. One difficulty we ran into was that the ear tags were often covered in heavy dirt. In order to read them, we needed to scrape the dirt off with a sharp knife. We performed this on every cow that had a dirty ear tag. What amazed me, however, was that the rancher, just by looking at the cow, could recite the number on her ear tag before we had even begun the scraping process. There must have been a hundred head of cattle passing through that chute. He got it right every time. That’s when I realized how much this rancher cared about his cattle. When I presented our analysis of the data, I could see how happy he was that the success rate of artificial insemination had improved and how appreciative he was that we were willing to make the drive out to his ranch and perform the preg-checks. Furthermore, I could see his look of relief in finding an AI technique that seemed to be working. This meant more than just winning a ribbon at a show. It meant putting food on the table.

I got to see a lot during this experience. I acquired new veterinary skills, learned about the cattle business and gained a lot of hands-on experience that will benefit me far into the future. But in the end, like it always does, it comes down to the person behind the animals. In this case, I got to help out a rancher.
Was this a valuable experience?
As a participant in the Pfizer Animal Health Bovine Externship Program, I worked during summer 2011 at Keseca Veterinary Clinic in Geneva, N.Y., a primarily dairy practice with an active in-house mastitis lab. This was a valuable experience in which I had the opportunity to work with several vets of varying ages and backgrounds, to observe and help with individual cow medicine, and to develop an appreciation for the importance of establishing relationships between the dairy farmer, herdsman and veterinarian.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
Having grown up on a small dairy farm, I have spent a great deal of time working with cows, but I was new to seeing farms from the perspective of the veterinarian.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
Keseca is a progressive clinic that provides its clients with many services beyond hands-on animal medicine, and I had the opportunity to help with mastitis sampling and culturing, evaluations of parlor equipment and milking technique, and presenting calving clinics in Spanish for new workers.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
Among other things, this externship reminded me that I thoroughly enjoy working with farmers, and that the role of a dairy vet is challenging, stimulating and rewarding, and one that I would consider for a career.
Was this a valuable experience?
I shadowed the large-animal vets at Applebrook Veterinary Clinic, a mixed-animal practice that sees cattle and small animals, as well as some horses and small ruminants. I rode along for morning herd checks, observed and assisted with DA surgery, participated during dystocia, performed physical exams, dehorned calves, assisted with vaccinations, examined and trimmed feet with the assistance of the veterinarian, and observed tissue sampling for diagnostic purposes, just to name some highlights. These experiences were extremely valuable to me, as I feel the classroom aspect of school tends to pull students away from direct animal exposure.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
This externship helped me to gain confidence in challenging situations such as examining feet with limited restraint equipment as well as performing a simple physical exam and coming up with my own diagnosis and treatment plan. It was also great to work on my palpation skills. The veterinarians whom I worked with will definitely be resources for me in the future.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed working with the producers and helping to solve problems related to animal health and production. I really enjoyed the challenge of a dystocia or trying to solve a problem such as increased cases of metritis on a certain farm. Somewhat surprisingly, I learned of the value of being diverse in my career plans. We saw both dairy and beef cattle, and cattle producers often had a horse or litter of puppies that needed to be looked at, and we had a few calls to look at sheep. This diversity in my skill set could be a good way to keep clients, as other dairy practices may not choose to look at these cases.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I will definitely keep bovine practice at the forefront in my future career options, and this experience was a great way for me to hone my skills and prepare for another year of school.
ADAM M. TOWNSEND
Cornell University

Countryside Veterinary Clinic

Was this a valuable experience?
My exposure to a progressive dairy practice is an experience that I wouldn’t trade for anything. I had a great time working with every veterinarian I met, and I never failed to learn something on each call.

How important was it to get exposed to cattle?
I had worked with cattle before, but it is always nice to get out on new facilities with new ways of doing things in order to get more comfortable with those systems.

What did you like most about cattle practice?
I enjoyed the diversity of calls at the practice I worked at this summer. The size of the farms in upstate New York varies greatly, so I was able to see how to work with smaller clients on single cow calls and larger clients on weekly herd checks.

After this experience, will you consider cattle practice as a career option?
I was, and still am, considering a career as a dairy veterinarian.