Sara Ellicott Joins Extension Team

Sara Ellicott is the newest Extension Educator to join UNL Extension in Saunders County. She is working with livestock-based programs aimed at adults. Additionally, she is responsible for livestock programs focused on diversified livestock issues, acreage owners, value-added opportunities and the agro-environmental trail at ARDC. Sara will also have some youth development duties.

Sara previously worked with camp programming and development coordination in the state 4-H office where she served as the 4-H Youth Development Outreach Program Associate. She assisted in the management of the State’s three 4-H camps.

Sara earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, in 2001. She then earned her Master of Agriculture, Beef Industry Leadership from Colorado State University in 2003. In addition to working at the State 4-H office, her previous work experience also includes working with Kansas State Research-Extension, Ridgefield Farms Premium Hereford Beef, and Kansas Cattlemen’s Association. Sara grew up in agriculture, being raised on a family cow-calf and farming operation in Colorado. She is eager to meet producers in Saunders County and begin Extension programming.

Sara and her husband, Matt, live near Waverly. Her husband is also involved with UNL Extension in the Animal Science Department where he serves as an Extension Beef Genetics Specialist, supervises the Teaching herd. Dr. Spangler assumed this role when he began his employment with UNL in January of 2008. A native of Kansas, Dr. Spangler received his Bachelors degree in animal science from Kansas State University, Master’s in animal breeding and genetics from Iowa State and a Ph.D. in animal breeding and genetics from the University of Georgia.

The teaching herd consists of 220 heifers and mature cows, approximately 100 purebred Angus. The remaining cows are Husker Red and Husker Black composites. The Husker composites blend Red or Black Angus genetics with Simmental or Gelbvieh to produce seedstock that meet the needs of commercial producers. Cattle of the teaching herd are utilized in our research and teaching programs.

The unit maintains two separate cow herds, a Beef Cow/Calf Herd and a Beef Physiology Research herd. Karl Moline manages the unit and is assisted by Jeff Bergman. Karl and Jeff are both valued long-time employees at ARDC and integral members of the Teaching and Physiology Research teams. They are responsible for not only the day-to-day operations at the Cow/Calf unit, but also do a great job of juggling the responsibilities of providing animals for educational activities and assisting the research team with data collection and management.

Teaching Herd

Dr. Matt Spangler, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Beef Genetics Specialist, supervises the Teaching herd. Dr. Spangler assumed this role when he began his employment with UNL in January of 2008. A native of Kansas, Dr. Spangler received his Bachelors degree in animal science from Kansas State University, Master’s in animal breeding and genetics from Iowa State and a Ph.D. in animal breeding and genetics from the University of Georgia.

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**Shopping Right When Money’s Tight**

Everyone has to shop for groceries, some more than others. However, with rising gas prices the grocery store may be one of the prime spots that we are feeling the pinch. Remember ten years ago when a gallon of milk was slightly over two dollars? It is hard, and sometimes frustrating, to acknowledge today we pay almost twice that amount! Many people are beginning to worry about feeding their families, and are beginning to believe the myth that eating healthy is not possible on a budget.

I had to laugh the other night while watching an episode of Jay Leno. He was reading an ad about how people planned to save money at the grocery store during this time of economic hardship. The women interviewed all claimed they would cut out extras like cookies, crackers and potato chips. The men, on the other hand, planned to cut out expensive items like fresh fruit! As a dietitian, I first laughed, and then panicked! I realized then, that my job of teaching people how to eat right when money is tight is now more important than ever.

As hard as it may seem, it is possible to eat a nutritious diet on a tight budget. Below are a few suggestions that may help you to stretch your food dollar.

**Before Shopping:** One of the easiest ways to save money at the grocery store is by planning your meals ahead of time and writing out a grocery list. Menu planning is an excellent way to save money for a number of reasons. For one, you are able to plan meals using items that you already have at home, therefore decreasing chance of waste. Your shopping list will also help you to not forget food items. If items are forgotten, you will waste time and money by constantly having to run to the store throughout the week. Finally, if your meals are planned, you are less likely to hit the drive-thru on your way home from work which will save your waist and your pocket book.

At my home, I begin with a meal planner like the one seen below. I then fill in what we plan to eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks throughout the entire week. If you’re anything like me, you tend to have the same things for breakfast such as cereal, milk and coffee. However, I still fill in my meal plan, so that I make sure I have enough for the week, or I add them to my grocery list. Most of us also, have at least one evening that we eat out, so I immediately cross off one dinner when I am meal planning. Once my meal plan is complete, I take the time to examine my refrigerator and kitchen cabinets. This allows me to see which items I have on hand and which I need to add to my shopping list.

**Please note, this is only a sample menu and is not intending to meet your dietary needs. To find out how much you need to eat everyday for optimal health, please visit MyPyramid at http://mypyramid.gov/**.

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**Accreage Programs Available 24/7**

Accreage owners have a valuable resource available at the click of a mouse. Recorded programs are available on UNL’s Accreage and Small Farms Insights website. Each program lasts approximately 2 hours and are presented by educators and specialists. The programs are available for viewing anytime. Handouts can be downloaded in PDF format, as well.

Programs include:
- Accreage Landscape Design Basics
- Fire on the Acreage
- Growing for Farmers Markets and Other Direct Markets
- In the Vegetable Gardens: Melons, Squash & Gourds
- Management of Small Ponds
- Organic Production for Accreages
- Trees for Accreages

Visit the website at: http://acreage.unl.edu/clinic/clinic.htm.

**Cow/calf Research Herd**

from the teaching herd are transported to East Campus for use in a number of classes, including Animal Management, Animal Production Skills, Livestock Evaluation, Cow-Calf Management, Beef Cattle Merchandising and Reproductive Physiology courses. Students in these classes gain experience in animal handling, artificial insemination, pregnancy diagnosis, evaluation of cattle and performance records for breeding purposes, semen collection, live animal evaluation to estimate carcass traits, and gain hands on experience managing a cow-calf operation. Cattle from this herd are also utilized in various extension programs and youth judging contests throughout the year.

The Teaching herd calves from about February 20th until March 31st each year and utilizes artificial insemination (AI) from proven sires to produce about 70% of the calf crop. Sires are chosen based on Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) calculated by the breed associations which are used to rank the genetic potential of sires for numerous traits. Following the AI period, clean-up bulls, some of which are produced within the program, remain the herd of the cows. The Beef Cattle Merchandising class, under the direction of Dr. Spangler, markets around 40 bulls through an annual bull sale held in April on East Campus. The fifteenth annual “Bulls Worth Waiting For” sale is scheduled for April 11, 2009.

The teaching herd also supplies breeding bulls and semen for the other cow-calf operations within the university system, including the Physiology herd at ARDC and herds at Whitman (Gudmonson Ranch) and Virginia (Dalby-Halleck), Nebraska. The teaching herd has never been static and strives to be progressive in adopting new nutritional, reproductive, and genetic research in order to stay current and better serve the seedstock customers and students alike.

**Research Herd**

The research herd is used to conduct basic and applied research in beef cattle reproductive physiology and contains 220 cows. Dr. Andrea Cupp, an associate professor in beef reproductive physiology, supervises the research herd. Dr. Cupp is currently conducting research on reproductive development and management in both bulls and females. Her research includes collaborative projects with Dr. Rick Funston, beef reproductive extension specialist at North Platte, Dr. Jennifer Wood, reproductive physiologist at Lincoln, and Dr. Robert Cushman, beef reproductive research scientist at the US Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center.

Dr. Cupp’s laboratory is interested in molecular signals that affect egg quality and sperm production. Her lab has demonstrated that a gene, Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) can produce proteins that stimulate spermatogenesis and follicle development (the follicle contains the egg and allows for maturation of the egg). In addition, this same gene can produce antagonistic proteins that inhibit spermatogenesis and development of the ovarian follicle.
Thus, manipulation of how this gene is regulated could enhance or inhibit fertility in cows and bulls. Therefore, the long term goals of Dr. Cupp’s lab are to figure out how to regulate this gene to enhance fertility in both bulls and cows.

A collaborative research project, with Dr. Jennifer Wood and Dr. Robert Cushman, is to determine genes that are involved in oocyte (egg) quality. These scientists are treating cows with different levels of progesterone to develop abnormal follicles (persistent follicles) that will have an altered gene profile. Their intent is to compare this altered profile with follicles developed under “normal conditions” to obtain genes which may be good markers for competent and non-competent eggs. Additionally, this group of scientists is also trying to determine if cows with larger ovarian reserve (born with more follicles on their ovary and measured by counting number of antral follicles) also have better oocytes (eggs) and remain in the herd for a longer period of time. They are hopeful that using predictors such as number of antral follicles (counted by using ultrasound technology) may aid producers in determining which heifers should remain in the herd and may have greater longevity.

Collaborative research with Dr. Funston and Dr. Rasby is being conducted to evaluate the effects of feeding dried distillers grains to replacement heifers. Heifers from both ARDC and Dalbey-Halleck farm in Virginia, Nebraska are being utilized for this research. Results from this research have demonstrated increased conception rates to heifers developed with dried distillers grain. Thus, these scientists are trying to determine what components of heifer development may be altered to increase conception rates.

The faculty and staff of the Cow/Calf Unit have two full-time employees. Karl Moline, the Manager, has been with the University since 1981. Karl and his wife Kathy live in Lincoln and have two sons, Mike and Craig. Jeff Bergman, Ag Technician II, has worked for the University since 1980. Jeff and his wife Trish live near Ithaca have two children Dustin and Chelsea. In addition, students from the University are also hired to assist as needed according to the various seasonal demands associated with a cow/calf operation.

Management of the Cow/Calf Research Unit

The Cow/Calf Unit has

ARDC Feature Unit Cow/Calf Research

Karl Moline

Jeff Bergman

The most important point I can make is that once you make a shopping list, you have to stick to it. Grocery stores do an amazing job of marketing. Keep in mind, just because the product looks like it is on special, does not mean you are going to be saving money. Furthermore, additional tips for saving include, not shopping when you are hungry, shopping without children when possible, comparing name brands to store brands and stocking up on high priced items when they are on sale.

As I stated in the beginning, most people think that they have to forego good nutrition in order to save money. However, that is certainly not true. For example, healthy, inexpensive choices can be found in every food group.

The Grain Group: Grain foods tend to be one of the least expensive products you can buy. Keep in mind, convenience products like flavored rice and packaged pasta mixes cost a lot more than the alternative. By stock- ing up on low cost grain products like whole wheat noodles, brown rice, store brand cereals and oatmeal you will not only save money, but you will also save added calo- ries and sodium.

The Fruit and Vegetable Groups: A common myth is that fruits and vegetables are too expensive.

While that can be true, one easy way to overcome this is to purchase these items when they are in season and cost less. Also, again, try and forget convenience. A bag of pre- cut salad can cost as much as three heads of lettuce! Furthermore, when these foods are not in season, you can look for frozen, dried and canned fruits and vegetables.

The Meat Group: You can save money in this group a number of ways. First, look for the store brand or generic brand when possible. Secondly, buy the least expensive products you can buy. Keep in mind, both milk and cheese can be put in the freezer if neces- sary. Finally, check the container for expiration dates and search for the longest date possible.

After Shopping: The best thing you can do is go home immediately after grocery shopping and put the foods away to prevent spoilage. This would also be the time to divide and freeze portions of meats and cheeses to save for later use. Finally, use foods with the earliest expiration dates first to prevent waste.

With grocery prices continuing to rise, it is crucial that we find ways to save money, while still providing nutritious meals for our families. It is imperative that you begin with a meal plan and that you stick to it. In the beginning this may seem like it takes a lot of time, but just like anything, it gets easier with practice. Also, by utilizing the tips above, you can choose nutritious foods and still get the best bang for your buck. For more infor- mation on how your family can eat healthy while spending your food dollar wisely, please visit the Food Stamp Nutrition Connection at http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov.


Casey Campbell is a Registered Dietitian with the Nutrition Education Program in Dodge, Saunders and Washington Counties. The Nutrition Education Program (NEP) is sponsored by the University of Nebraska, Extension and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. NEP is a program designed to teach nutrition education to those on food stamps or those who qualify. If you think you or your family may qualify for NEP and are interested in free nutrition education, please call Casey at (402) 624-8022.
Scenes from the Dairy Open House

The Nebraska State Dairy Association (NSDA) and UNL Dairy Research Faculty, Staff and Graduate Students hosted an educational day and open house at the ARDC Dairy Research Unit in August. The day’s activities included self-guided tours of Dairy Research Unit and a presentation by Dr. Paul Fricke, Associate Professor & Extension Specialist in Dairy Reproduction, University of Wisconsin-Madison on “Methods to improve reproductive success of your dairy facility.”

Graduate students play a vital role in dairy research at UNL. Graduate student, Ezequias Lopez was on hand at the open house to explain ongoing research at the dairy unit.

Those attending the Dairy Research Unit Open House learned about reproductive success in dairy operations from Dr. Paul Fricke of the University of Wisconsin.

Canadian Producers Visit ARDC

A group of Canadian farmers visited the ARDC recently. While the Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario was primarily interested in no-till cropping systems, as the group’s name would suggest, they were interested in anything “innovative”. And since many of the members have diversified operations including livestock, the group was interested in learning about byproducts feeding during a stop at the ARDC.

During their trip to Nebraska, the group stopped at various farms, businesses and met with UNL extension educators and faculty. Galen Erickson, Beef Feedlot Extension Specialist, provided the group with a tour and presentation on byproducts feeding systems at the ARDC feedlot. They also learned about byproducts feeding in cow/calf research from Dan Larson, a graduate student in UNL’s Department of Animal Science.

Canadian Producers Visit ARDC

Field Days Wrap Up for 2008

By the time you receive this issue of Extended Visions, our field day season will have officially concluded for 2008. As we go to press, the Crop Management Diagnostic Clinics and Soybean Management Field Days have wrapped up and we are making final preparations for Solution Days at York and the Irrigation and Energy Conservation Field Day at Clay Center.

The off-site field days mentioned above are programs that vary from program to program, the field days are partnerships of UNL Extension, the Nebraska Soybean Board, the Nebraska Corn Board, the Nebraska Corn Growers Association, Syngenta, and NK. More details on the results and impact of these programs will be included in the next Extended Visions.

Jensen is New Ag Educator at Mead School

Kori Jensen is the new Agricultural Education Instructor and FFA Advisor at Mead Public School. She is a 2002 graduate of Logan View and a 2006 Graduate of UNL. The past two years she worked as the Agricultural Educator at Prague High School. This year she hopes to continue Mead’s tradition of offering students educational opportunities in the classroom. Kori hopes to increase involvement in the FFA, and encourages students to participate in a variety of contests and activities. This year she wants students to focus on their Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs and keeping accurate records of their project. She is excited to work with the students and teachers at Mead and is looking forward to working with the community.

Watch for updates on what’s going on at MPS’s ag program in future issues!