

HIGHLIGHTS

A PUBLICATION FOR OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Winter 1998

Message from the Chair



The lead article in this issue of *Highlights* concerns the recently finalized transfer of the Department of Avian Sciences to Animal Science. The avian sciences program was established on the Davis campus in 1908 as the Division of Poultry Husbandry. Two more name changes were to occur- to the Department of Poultry Husbandry in 1951 and the Department of Avian Sciences in 1969.

Avian Sciences and Animal Science occupied different buildings on campus for most of those years (Asmundson and Hart Halls, respectively) but in 1988 we were reunited on different floors of the new Meyer Hall. Now we are one department and sharing our resources.

Although one might assume that avian science programs will suffer a loss of identity due to the merger, it is our intention that the existing avian science programs (teaching, research and extension) will flourish and expand as part of a larger department with its greater resource base.

For example, we have already added poultry sections to our student internship program and appointed representatives of the poultry industry to our Department Development Board. The newly established Center for Avian Biology will serve as a focal point for avian research.

Perhaps more importantly, interactions with new friends and colleagues will generate fresh ideas and new collaborations. To alumni and friends of Avian Sciences, as well as faculty, emeritus professors, extension specialists and staff, WELCOME ABOARD! We are glad to have you as part of the team.

Ed Price

Department of Animal Science, UC Davis

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Department of Avian Sciences is Transferred to Animal Science

In January, the UC Office of the President approved the transfer of one of the oldest departments on the UC Davis campus, the Department of Avian Sciences, to the Department of Animal Science. The transfer issue arose in January, 1997, when the faculty and Extension specialists in the Department of Avian Sciences voted to meet with the Department of Animal Science to discuss a possible merger. Avian Sciences retirements in the early 1990s had reduced the number of faculty and staff to the point where the administrative workload on each faculty member had become inordinate. Actually, consolidation was not a new issue for these two groups. Avian Sciences had consolidated their administrative operation with Animal Science two years earlier and learned that being part of a larger department was not only cost effective but provided many other benefits such as continuity when staff were ill or on vacation. In addition, some of the faculty and specialists in the two departments had a history of working together in teaching, research and various committees.

Professor Kirk Klasing, Interim Chair for Avian Sciences, and Professor Ed Price, Chair of the Department of Animal Science, repeatedly convened their respective Executive Committees during the first few months of 1997 to discuss the similarities and differences of the two departments and establish the conditions under which a consolidation could take place. Chair Price noted that the joint meetings were an essential part of the merger discussions. These meetings helped the two departments to become acquainted and, at the same time, created a forum for healthy discussion of our differences. Everything was put on the table, teaching philosophies, research goals, funding for graduate students, student advising loads, facility needs, etc. Even the Dean of the College was brought into the discussion when it was discovered that the funding base for the two departments was different.

In late spring, terms for the merger were reached and the issue was put to a vote by both departments. Avian Sciences faculty and specialists voted to transfer their FTE to Animal Science and the latter department voted to accept them. On July 1, 1997, the two departments unofficially began operating as a single department. At

the same time, the Avian Sciences faculty and specialist offices on the third floor of Meyer were moved to the first and second floors with Animal Science faculty and specialists. Ed Price continues to serve as Chair for the expanded Department of Animal Science.

The recently established Center for Avian Biology will continue to provide leadership for the Department's research program with birds. As consolidation of the two programs proceed, the teaching, and extension programs are being integrated with the goal of maintaining the visibility of existing avian programs. For example, specific tracks for Avian Biology and Poultry Management have been proposed for the Animal Science Major. Also, funds have been obtained to renovate several existing research buildings at the Avian Sciences Field Facility on Hopkins Road. Once the consolidation has been finalized, a campaign will be initiated to increase scholarship support for avian-oriented students.



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Mergers Can Even Be Fun



On July 8, 1997, a luncheon was held at the UC Davis University Club to celebrate the merger of the Departments of Avian Sciences and Animal Science. About 80 persons from the two departments were

on hand to enjoy a delicious lunch, good conversation and door prizes galore. In the photo above (left to right), Emeritus Professors Howard Kratzer, Bob Laben and Frank Ogasawara, Extension Specialist Ralph Ernst and Staff Research Associates Pam Nieberg and Mary Horton search for the wackiest new name for the merged department.

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Dr. Peter Robinson, Dairy Nutritionist Joins Extension Specialists



We are pleased to inform you that in August (1997) Dr. Peter Robinson joined the Department as the new Extension Dairy Nutrition Specialist. Robinson fills the position that was vacated by Don Bath several years ago.

Dr. Robinson obtained a B.S. degree from the University of Manitoba, a M.S. degree from the University of

Guelph (Ontario, Canada) and, in 1983, a Ph.D. from Cornell University. After a two year postdoctoral appointment at a world-famous dairy laboratory in the Netherlands, he worked as a Research Associate at the University of Alberta followed by an impressive record in research and extension with Agriculture Canada. Prior to coming to Davis, he was employed as a Principal Dairy Nutrition Research Scientist in the Dairy and Forage Program at the Fredericton Research Centre in the Province of New Brunswick, Canada. While at Fredericton, he held Adjunct Faculty appointments at the Atlantic Veterinary College on Prince Edward Island and in the Department of Animal Science of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

Dr. Robinson has a wealth of experience working with extension personnel, industry nutritionists, producers and veterinarians. The nutritional software developed by Dr. Robinson and his colleagues to help dairy producers evaluate the protein status of dairy rations has proven very popular. His research interests include protein nutrition of dairy cattle and the evaluation of methods to assess forage quality. He is also interested in the impact of feeding management on milk protein and fat levels and on-farm management systems to reduce the environmental impact of dairy cows.

Dr. Robinson is currently on the editorial board of the Journal of Dairy Science and Animal Feed Science and Technology. He can be reached by phone at the Department of Animal Science (530/754-7565) or by e-mail (phrobinson@ucdavis.edu).

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Undergraduate Enrollment Continues to Climb

Enrollment figures (by major) for fall, 1997, are:

Animal Science	460
Animal Science & Management	145
Avian Science	23

The Department ranks 6th among animal science departments countrywide in number of undergraduate students in the fall of 1997. Texas A&M is tops with 1,103 majors.



Over 300 students, faculty, staff and alumni were on hand for the 1997 Annual Fall Department BBQ on October 9 at the Recreation Pool Lodge.

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Then and Now

UC Davis continues its tradition of livestock evaluation.



Judging Sheep - About 1907



Judging Sheep - 1997

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Judging Team on the Move

The Animal Science/Cal Aggie Judging Team participated in two novice contests in Los Angeles and Medford coming away with high individual overall in both competitions. The Junior Team was extremely busy last fall preparing for the upcoming season, which began in Phoenix, January 3, 1998. The ten Junior Team members are: Kristi Arcularius of Bishop, CA; Allison Marie Bober of Yorba Linda, CA; Paula DeMulder of Montague, CA; Robin Griffiths of Sonora, CA; Julie Heath of Clayton, CA; TNay Kawcak of Altaville, CA; Frank Martin of Etna, CA; Trina Myers of Modesto, CA; Katie Williams of El Cajon, CA; and Christina Zaonoine of Healdsburg, CA.

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Department Hosts Judging Events

The Department of Animal Science and undergraduates in the Animal Science & Management Major hosted the 14th Annual Community College Judging Field Day at the Cole Facility on October 10, 1997. Nearly 100 agriculture students from California and Oregon participated in this year's event, with Modesto Junior College winning the High Team Award. One again, having a junior division at this year's field day permitted participation by the State Champion 4-H and FFA Teams from both states. The Field Day concluded with an Awards Ceremony and BBQ at the Animal Science Teaching Facility.

Since 1948 the Department of Animal Science has hosted an open work-out for Senior and Community College Teams traveling to the Cow Palace contest in San Francisco. Ten teams from as far away as Kansas and Texas stopped in Davis on October 31 to stretch their legs and refine their evaluation skills. Once again, our highly competent staff and undergraduate students did a superb job of displaying outstanding livestock and providing the same courtesy we receive when visiting other agricultural colleges.

In March, the Department and College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences will host over 2,000 Future Farmers of America and 4-H students, who will participate in over twenty competitions and performances.

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Spotlight on the Faculty Professor James Millam



When it comes to reproduction in birds, there are not many facets that Professor James Millam has not considered. Trained as an avian reproductive physiologist at the University of Minnesota, Professor Millam specializes in how the brain balances inputs from environmental events like daylength or sexual stimulation from a mate, to control the activity of the pituitary gland and gonads. Understanding differences in the brains of various species and how the brain responds to different environmental stimuli can help us understand what turns

reproduction in birds on and off. Such information can be used in helping exotic birds to breed in captivity or in determining how environmental pollutants can interfere with reproduction in nature.

Professor Millam's research is in three areas. His longest standing research interest is in the regulation of the nerve cells that produce gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), one of the major brain switches controlling reproduction. Current work with turkeys is designed to determine the neurochemical identity of brain circuits that control input to the GnRH cells. Another related project seeks to determine the neurochemical identity of brain cells serving as photoreceptors in the brain. Daylength factors controlling reproduction can be measured by deep-brain photoreceptors in some bird species. Yes, eyes are not essential to control this function in birds.

A second area of research is in the captive reproduction of parrots. About one-third of the world's parrots are threatened or endangered. Since importation of parrots is now illegal, Professor Millam is looking for new ways to breed parrots in captivity. As director of the

Department's Psittacine Research Project, he maintains research colonies of Cockatiels and Orange-Winged Amazons which he and other researchers are using for studies on immunology, nutrition, behavior and health. Professor Millam's work with psittacines focuses on environmental regulation of reproduction and behavior. For example, recent work has looked at how early developmental experiences can affect tameness towards people. In addition, collaborations with Professors Kirk Klasing and Pat Wakenell have demonstrated how early interactions with humans can alter immune status.

His newest research interest concerns the effect of certain environmental pollutants on sexual development. More specifically, Professor Millam and his collaborator, Dr. Michael Fry, Director of the College's Center for Avian Biology, are determining whether neonatal exposure to certain pesticides and plasticizers can affect those portions of the brain controlling sexual behavior. This work is being funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Professor Millam teaches three courses, Management of Companion Birds, Avian Reproduction and Avian Physiology.



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The College of Agriculture at a Turning Point in Its History

James H. Meyer, Chancellor Emeritus and Emeritus Professor in the Department, was invited as a participating scholar to present one sector of a live, six-part satellite national teleconference series originating at Clemson University in Greenville, NC, on December 11th. Some of the nation's most respected scholars shared their visions of the future for higher education and land-grant institutions.

After presenting his opening remarks, uplinked from a studio in Sacramento, Dr. Meyer responded to questions from audiences across the nation who participated in the telecast discussions via a telecommunications network that linked all the land-grant universities.

Dr. Meyer's topic, "The College of Agriculture at a Turning Point in Its History," evolved from his research on land-grant colleges, particularly colleges of agriculture. He feels they must incorporate a wider vision of the definition of agriculture, realigning their mission to encompass environmental management of all lands, not just those under agricultural production. Farmers, he feels, have a responsibility to consider long-term usefulness of their land, and colleges of agriculture must teach not only the dwindling number of farmers and ranchers but also environmentalists how to communicate effectively with each other. Our colleges of agriculture, he is convinced, contain some of the best experts in animal science, management of air, land and water, environmental toxicology and all the other disciplines that contribute to the best knowledge of how to manage our earth so it will survive. Increasing the awareness of the effects of human population growth, Dr. Meyer has come to conclude, is essential if we are not to overwhelm the earth.

The teleconference was sponsored by, among others, the Council on Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST), the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) Board on Agriculture and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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Notable Notes

Steven Echelmeier, graduate student of Professor Ed DePeters, received the Dr. Alexander Kutches, Sr. Memorial Scholarship Award from the California-Nevada Chapter of the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (ARPAS). The award recognizes outstanding graduate students in the area of dairy nutrition. Another graduate student of Professor DePeters, **Catherine "Cat" Burch**, received the Dr. Antonio Jimenez Memorial Award, also given by the California-Nevada Chapter of ARPAS. The Jimenez Award is given to an outstanding graduate student who wishes to pursue a career in animal, dairy or poultry science.

Recent graduate of the Department's Master of Agriculture and Management Program, **Pat Blacklock**, was recently appointed as Director of Administration and Policy Analysis for the California Cattlemen's Association (CCA). In addition to various administrative duties, Pat will assist Executive Vice-President, John Braly, with issues involving public lands, cattle health, the CCA Feeder Council. While at Davis, Pat helped to develop the Back in the Black program, a short course designed to improve ranch profitability.

Carrie Russikoff, Department Advising Associate, was married to Gregory J. Devine (see photo) on September 6, 1997. Congratulations and best wishes to the happy couple!



Former staff member, **Robert Finlay**, passed away on December 14,

1997. Bob was the manager of the Department Sheep Facility for 36 years until his retirement in 1980. Also, **Helen Heitman**, wife of the late Animal Science Professor Hubert Heitman, passed away at her home on December 9, 1997.

