

Creating A New Pathway to the College of Veterinary Medicine

By Laura Moser

The decreasing number of veterinarians specializing in food production animals has sparked a great deal of concern in the animal agriculture community. Many industry and university initiatives are being put in place to address this concern.

In May 2005, an undergraduate program was approved at MSU to prepare students for careers in herd based production medicine and agricultural practice. The Production Medicine Scholars Program, under the guidance of the Animal Science Department, creates another pathway into the College of Veterinary Medicine for students pursuing careers with production animals. Each year up to 10 students who have addressed the requirements may be granted, through a competitive selection process, admission to the professional veterinary medicine program.

In addition to pre-veterinary requirements, students enrolled in Production Medicine Scholars will study finance, statistics and advance sciences. There is a requirement that these students have direct experience with husbandry and management on farms.

"The Production Medicine Scholars Program should not be viewed as an easy method to gain acceptance into the professional veterinary medical program," states Roy Fogwell, professor in the Department of Animal Science.



The Production Medicine Scholars Program is one way MSU is working to increase the number of students interested in food production animals. Pictured is a class at the Dairy Training Center at Green Meadow Farms in Elsie.

"Within the Production Medicine Scholars, the academic requirements are high, the level of work

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**– Roy Fogwell, Professor,
Department of Animal Science, MSU**

is rigorous and the standards for CVM admission are uncompromised."

One objective of the production medicine scholars program is to better prepare veterinarians who work with food animals. On many of today's farm operations the veterinarian is a key member of the management team and is called upon to address more than

health concerns. The veterinarian must be able to interpret farm records and financial reports to help make herd management decisions.

"As the animal agriculture industry changes, so does the role of the veterinarian," says Tom Herdt, chair of the Large Animal Clinical Sciences in the CVM. "There is a strong need to train students in traditional areas, but we also need to train them in broader areas of management and finances."

Students in the Production Medicine Scholars Program will be expected to gain hands-on experience on a farm either through their own family's operation, internships or on-farm employment. Farms on campus will be used for students to gain experience. The students will also be expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to animal agriculture through youth activities, family experienc-

es, employment, extracurricular activities, or other forms of service or activities within the livestock industry. It is important to note that experiences with horses does not qualify for the Production Medicine Scholars Program.

"The lack of veterinarians working with food animals is more an issue of competition than lack of interest," Fogwell says. "The vast majority of the 600-800 applicants to the CVM are females interested in horses and small animals. The number of people interested in food animals is small and they are getting out competed. This program doesn't make the entrance requirements easier, it pulls the applicants with demonstrated interest in food animals out of the large applicant pool."

Students interested in the Production Medicine Scholars Program should enroll in the program their freshmen year. With only four credits of unrestricted electives, the students need to be deliberate in their scheduling to complete the program in four years. The Production Medicine Scholars can apply to CVM before completing their B.S. degree, however they must complete their B.S. before enrolling in the CVM. Accepted students must maintain a 3.2 grade point average through their undergraduate studies. Typically Production Medicine Scholars participants will be accepted into CVM one to two years before they actually start the professional program.

The major field of study of all Production Medicine Scholars will be Animal Science. The Department of Animal Science will not impose any entrance requirements or selection criteria for a student to be a Production Medicine Scholar. According to Fogwell, there will be forthright discussions about professional goals and high

academic performance will be required.

All candidates for the professional veterinary program, including Production Medicine Scholars participants, will be selected for admission into CVM entirely by the Committee on Student Admission that is based in CVM. Except for letters of reference that students solicit from various faculty members, the Department of Animal Science will have no direct role in the admissions process to CVM.

"Even if students do not attend veterinary college, with the additional study in finance, science and farm experience, this program represents an excellent education," Fogwell states.

"The departments of Animal Science and Large Animal Clinical Sciences are very excited about this new educational opportunity for future veterinarians. In addition, we are enthusiastic and optimistic that this program will address partially the current shortage of production medicine veterinarians," he stresses.

More information about the Production Medicine Scholars Program may be obtained within the MSU Department of Animal Science Web site at: www.canr.msu.edu/dept/ans or contact Roy Fogwell at fogwell@msu.edu or (517) 432-1385.

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