



# DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025

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## We're hiring

**Motor Vehicle and  
Ag Equipment  
Mechanic, N.D. Ag  
Experiment Station**  
[https://ndsu.ag/  
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## Spring brings commencement, alumni awards, new retail site



I am writing this article in the second week of April and I have to say it: Spring is arriving!! Seems like we will get well into the 60s this week. There, short, sweet and to the point.

It has been one year already since we restarted the departmental newsletter which provides you with information about what is going on in the department and introducing to you some of our great students, staff and faculty. The spring semester is close to an end, which means that we are preparing for our commencement ceremony (Saturday, May 17, at 2 p.m.). The Cambridge Dictionary says "commencement" means the *beginning* of something, not ending. In an academic context the commencement ceremony signifies students are starting their careers and the next phase of their lives.

In our department, the pinning ceremony for Veterinary Technology students will be on May 16. The following day we will see undergraduate students from Animal Science/Equine Science as well as graduate students walking across the stage in the Fargodome to receive their diplomas. Congratulations to all graduates and their families, teachers and advisers.

In this issue we have articles that inform you about the many different activities that our students, staff and faculty have worked on in the last few months. Mr. Steven "Skip" Anderson and our sheep unit are featured in this issue. Students' academic and team accomplishments are also highlighted, and adding to this are arti-

cles about Little "I," ASGSO and others.

Recently, the NDSU Foundation announced the 2025 NDSU Foundation Alumni Award recipients. These outstanding North Dakota State University alumni and partners will be honored for their accomplishments and contributions at the "Evening of Distinction," to be held on April 24. It is with great pleasure that I inform you that Dr. Kelly Swanson '97 was the recipient of the Henry L. Bolley Achievement Award. Presently, he is the director of the Division of Nutritional Sciences and professor of nutrition and nutrigenomics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In addition to a B.S. in animal and range sciences from NDSU, he holds both an M.S. and Ph.D. in nutritional sciences from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Congratulations Dr. Swanson!

Finally, last month we opened our Meat Science facility at the Peltier Complex. It is state-of-the-art and it was possible thanks to the generosity of many donors. It will support our research, outreach and teaching/training programs.

We also opened our retail store, conveniently located by the atrium (next to the front door on the east side of the complex). Several undergraduate students are gaining retail experience offering various meat products. So far it has been a great success! Hope you can stop by and see for yourself the variety of products we have to offer.

This is it for now. Enjoy the rest of the spring and have a wonderful summer. See you around.

Best regards,  
Guillermo

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# Little 'I' showcases student skills

## Lamb lead contest makes its return; Dr. Stokka honored



This year marked the 99th Little International, which took place Feb. 15 at Shepperd Arena. The theme for the 99th Little "I" was "Growing Dreams, Harvesting Success." We were grateful to have nearly 200 students showing, curing a ham, public speaking or participating as committee chairs or members.

This year we were able to bring back an old tradition — lamb lead.

The lamb lead contest had seven contestants who each represented a student organization. They were judged on their knowledge of the wool industry and the wool-based outfit they put together. Our champion lamb lead contestant was Garrett Kuhn representing student government.

The 99th Little International overall showman was AJ Heins of New Salem, N.D., and the reserve overall showman was Kasi Holm of Ashley, N.D. The champion ham was cured by John O'Neill of Fargo. The winner of the public speaking contest was Kalista Bormann of Madi-

son, Minn., while the sweepstakes champion was Kasi Holm.

Dr. Gerald Stokka was honored as the 99th Little International Agriculturist of the Year. Stokka has devoted his life to veterinary medicine and livestock stewardship. Stokka was a great honoree that our members can strive to emulate, and we were pleased to have him join the Hall of Fame in the foyer of Shepperd Arena.

The Little "I" Management Team was manager Kiley Kvamme of Kindred, N.D., and assistant manager Taiton Axtman of Fargo. The Little "I" royalty were queen Jolie Sanders of New Salem, N.D., and princesses Madison Mertens of Berlin, Wis., and Caryn Marty of Chokio, Minn.

Congratulations to all contestants, committee chairs and members for hosting another successful Little International!

— Kiley Kvamme



Top picture, Maddy Scott drives her pig in the Crossbred Barrow 2 class. Second picture, Maggie Wertish is swept off her feet by fellow emcee Dawsyn Malkowski as they close out the 99th Little "I" show. Bottom picture, Linnea Axtman (left) and Emma Aberle show their goats. Above picture, Shepperd Arena is all decked out for this year's 99th Little International.



## Department comings and goings since December

### Warm welcome to...

*Roberta Dahlen — nutrition and reproduction research specialist*

*Pauliane Pucetti — post-doctoral research fellow*

*Briggs William Hoffman — born Dec. 15 to Extension sheep specialist Travis Hoffman*

*MacKenzie Grace Arntzen — born March 19 to Meat Lab assistant manager Jacob Arntzen*

### Fond farewell to...

*Austin Mikkelsen — motor vehicle and ag equipment mechanic*

*Rebecca Swanson — post-doctoral research fellow*

# ASGSO wraps up busy year

Animal Science Graduate Student Organization (ASGSO) members kept busy this past semester doing research projects, presenting at conferences, lecturing and teaching labs, and preparing to graduate!

ASGSO plans to have a spring gathering to celebrate finishing up research projects and to say goodbye to graduating students. Members will make tie blankets for YWCA Cass Clay as our spring philanthropy event. Carnivore Catering has taken a brief pause as we make the move to the new Peltier Complex Meat Lab.

ASGSO has assumed a new officer team for the upcoming year of Katrina Kratzke (president), Chutikun Kanjanaruch (vice president), Christy Finck (treasurer), and Keara Leong-Machielse (secretary). Good luck to our new graduate students as they take on their Animal Science programs and our graduating students as they pursue their futures.

— Brooklyn Kuzel,  
past ASGSO president



Chutikun Kanjanaruch bottle-feeds research lambs at the ANPC. She is a Ph.D. student and new vice president of ASGSO.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Casie Bass

### What was your field of study at NDSU?

• I earned a doctorate within the Department of Animal Sciences, with a focus in physiology of reproduction.

### When did you attend/graduate?

• 2012 to 2015

### What are you doing nowadays?

• I am a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at Purdue University. I teach several courses each year, including introduction to animal agriculture, two horse evaluation courses, and two reproductive management courses. I am also the Purdue horse judging team coach, and have been tasked with developing an equine program for the department.

### What is one of your favorite classroom/campus memories?

• I have so many amazing memories from NDSU. The graduate students, faculty and staff within our department were especially supportive of each other. We ran Color Me Rad 5Ks together, took evening cycling classes in the Wallman Wellness Center, had weekend-long study sessions, cooked great BBQ through Carnivore Ca-



tering, traveled to conferences in Canada, Puerto Rico and Colorado, and helped out with each other's research projects. I don't think I could choose just one favorite memory!

### What did you learn at NDSU that has helped you the most in your career/life?

• There were two vital life lessons I acquired from NDSU. First, I learned that completing great work takes a great team; very little is done alone. To this day, I continuously surround myself with "powerhouses," or people who support my ideas and help drive my professional goals forward. I have phenomenal teams of administrative assistants, teaching assistants, students, barn managers, colleagues and experts within various industries that are absolutely critical to me accomplishing what I do; I simply couldn't do it alone. As we all know, the strength of the bison really is in the herd!

Secondly, my amazing advisers, Drs. Anna Grazul-Bilska and Dale Redmer, in addition to passing on so much of their knowledge and skills to me, passed on a forever-love for delicious Indian cuisine!



Photo by Joshua Clarke of Purdue University

If you would like to be featured in an upcoming Alumni Spotlight or know someone you'd like to nominate, please contact Darla White at 701-231-7401 or [darla.white@ndsu.edu](mailto:darla.white@ndsu.edu) with the information.

# Contingent represents at ASAS

The Western Section and Southern Section American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) joint meeting was held in Arlington, Texas, from April 4-8. A number of graduate students and faculty members from the Animal Sciences Department attended the meeting. Several presented in the oral symposia sections and poster competitions, while Dr. Chris Schauer and grad student Jennifer Hurlbert represented NDSU on the Western Section Board of Directors. Jennifer, Samantha Ekstrom and Jaime Chambers competed in the Western Section Graduate Student Poster Competition, and Jennifer received third place in the contest. The group is already excited to attend next year's meeting in Estes Park, Colo.

— Jennifer Hurlbert



Top: from left, Antonio Braga, Dr. Carl Dahlen, Dr. Colin Tobin, Dr. Chris Schauer, Samantha Ekstrom, Jennifer Hurlbert, Christian Melby, Jaime Chambers, Imtiaz Ali and Brooklyn Kuzel represented NDSU at the ASAS meeting. Not pictured: Dr. Rachel Gibbs. Left: grad student Jennifer Hurlbert with her third-place poster.



From left, Madison Scott, Kathryn Schneider, Keyahna Musland and Allee Boyer represented NDSU at this year's Academic Quadrathlon event.

## Undergraduates compete at Academic Quadrathlon

The Academic Quadrathlon team competed at the Midwest American Society of Animal Science in Nebraska on March 9-10. The team consisted of Madison Scott, Kathryn Schneider, Keyahna Musland and Allee Boyer. They competed against teams from six other Midwestern universities in doing a written test, an oral presentation, a laboratory practical and a quiz bowl. Dr. Marc Bauer was the team's sponsor at the competition. Congratulations to the team for representing NDSU well.

## Fargo police honor shepherd for goat care

NDSU shepherd Steven "Skip" Anderson on Feb. 26 received a Letter of Recognition from the Fargo Police Department for his assistance with 14 goats and two dogs that became stranded. He was contacted by the police on a frigid day in December when a man transporting the goats through Fargo had a medical emergency. Skip cared for the animals until the owner was well enough to finish his journey. "I felt it was important for us to just jump right in and go care for those animals," he said.

LaVerne Buzick, the FPD's community service officer, said, "Skip was truly THE gift to our situation. If he had not been able to help, I truly don't know what we would have done." Buzick continued, "I hope NDSU is aware of what a fantastic and caring individual they have in their midst."



Steven "Skip" Anderson receives his Letter of Recognition on Feb. 26.

## NDSU student chosen for prestigious Frontiers in Reproduction course



Ruiz

Ph.D. student Bethania Davila Ruiz will participate in the Advanced Summer Course at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Massachusetts this year. She is one of 20 students from around the world selected to attend the Frontiers in Reproduction course.

Her advisor, Dr. Larry Reynolds,

served as a faculty/course consultant for 11 years and as co-director of the course for five years.

He said, "These are top-notch students, and being in a place like the Marine Biological Laboratory allows them to learn state-of-the-art methods and concepts."

More than 60 Nobel laureates have been affiliated with the laboratory as students, faculty, staff or visiting scientists. Bethania received one of two prestigious scholarships from the Society for the Study of Reproduction and the Gates Foundation to help pay for her attendance at the course.



# At sheep barn, the bleat goes on

Unit builds on yearslong legacy to serve NDSew

by Darla White  
Administrative Secretary

At NDSU's Sheep Unit, there are many ways to count sheep. You can count the number of breeds – 5. You can count the number of sheep there – over 500. You can count the number of years the unit has been raising Hampshire sheep – 110. And you can count the continuous years of breeding and raising sheep at NDSU – 131.

You can even count the number of sheep used in a photo shoot at the barn to inspire a muralist for a Grand Forks church. That would be one. One is also a meaningful number for the Sheep Unit manager.

"I joke that the university only has one president, one football coach, and one shepherd," says Steven "Skip" Anderson, NDSU's shepherd since 2009.

Skip is a cheerleader for the Sheep Barn and its contribution to the university. In 2016 he launched the NDSew

brand. It's featured on T-shirts, ear tags for the sheep, and the NDSU Sheep Unit Facebook page. He is enthusiastic about the sheep under his care

and the students and stakeholders who benefit from them.

The first sheep came to the college in 1894, so they have a long tradition at NDSU. The flock is currently represented by five breeds: purebred Hampshires, Columbias and Royal Whites, plus commercial Dorsets and composite hair sheep.

The sheep live at the unit year-round, and during the spring lambing season, it can seem like Skip lives there as well. Between feeding the sheep, preparing for classes, cleaning, doing repairs, teaching and ensuring the new lambs and their mothers are okay, sometimes he doesn't get home until the wee hours of the morn-



Above photo by Justin Eiler



Above, NDSU shepherd Steven "Skip" Anderson and the students who work at the Sheep Barn care for many lambs in the spring.

Left, a Hampshire sheep welcomes two lambs into the world just minutes after they were born.

ing. He's back at 7:30 a.m. to start the cycle all over again. It's all in a day's work for the NDSU shepherd.

"My goal is to continue to be one of the flagship universities with a sheep program," he says.

A big part of that goal is the students, and not just the seven student workers who help him feed and care for the flock. Undergraduates in nine courses

visit the unit every year to get hands-on learning. This is a great experience for them, Skip says, because they get to see and feel the sheep, and those interactive moments become teachable moments.

They aren't the only ones who get an up-close look at the sheep. For the past several years, Skip has taken lambs to visit

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# Sheep manure helps beautify NDSU, Fargo

From page 5

the Center for Child Development, which is NDSU's childcare and education program. When the children see the lambs, Skip says, "the kids' faces light up." He gets the same reaction from the hundreds of elementary and preschool students who tour the barn each year.

People of all ages who admire the flower beds on campus indirectly have the Sheep Unit to thank. About 10 years ago, it started supplying composted sheep ma-



nure to NDSU Grounds and Landscaping as well as the Fargo-Moorhead community gardens. Sheep manure is one of the best types of fertilizer, and the Sheep Unit has "an endless supply of it," Skip says. He created compost piles on the



The Sheep Barn, left, helps the campus in multiple ways. For one, it supplies composted sheep manure to NDSU Grounds and Landscaping for use in the flower beds.

property and is happy they go toward beautifying NDSU and helping the community.

One could say that the Sheep Unit has helped thousands of people over the years, but who's counting?

## Drought likely to impact livestock water quality

### Toxic levels of sulfates are a big concern

by **Dr. Miranda Meehan**  
Associate Professor and  
Livestock Environmental  
Stewardship Specialist



Access to adequate, good-quality water will continue to be a challenge for ranchers in North Dakota this

spring. Many ranchers in the region still depend on surface water sources, such as dugouts and stock dams, to provide water to grazing livestock.

Due to drought conditions and low spring runoff, many livestock water sources have either dried up or may be toxic to livestock.

When surface waters become low, the mineral component of the water becomes more concentrated because minerals do not evaporate with the water. Of particular concern are increased

concentrations of total dissolved solids (TDS) and sulfates, which can be toxic to livestock. For most classes of grazing livestock, the TDS in the water should be less than 5,000 parts per million (ppm).

Sulfate is part of the TDS. The recommended concentration should be less than 500 ppm for calves and less than 1,000 ppm for adult cattle. High levels of

sulfate can reduce copper availability in the diet.

Elevated levels of sulfates may cause loose stool, whereas very high levels of sulfate can induce central nervous system problems.

Water quality screenings conducted by NDSU Extension agents last fall found many water sources to have potentially toxic levels of sulfates, especially in western North Dakota.

As you prepare for the upcoming

grazing season, monitor water quality and evaluate alternative water options. We recommend a couple of tools to aid in monitoring water quality: a hand-held TDS meter and sulfate test strips. Both these tools are affordable and easy to use. If the screening indicates the TDS is greater than 4,500 ppm and/or sulfates are greater than 800 ppm, submit a sample to a lab for additional analysis.

If you have encountered water quality issues in the past, we encourage you to evaluate and consider developing an alternative water source. Installing a water development plan can help ensure that livestock have access to good-quality water throughout the grazing season and increase a ranch's drought resilience.

For more information on livestock water quality contact your local NDSU Extension office or visit <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/ag-hub/ag-topics/livestock/water>.



Livestock drinking from surface water sources could be hazardous this year because of drought and low spring runoff.



## Briefs

Dr. Joel Caton has been selected as the recipient of the Dale Hogoboom Presidential Professorship Award. This award goes to a faculty member who has attained a balanced academic record demonstrating excellence in teaching, research and service.



Caton

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Mikayla Faust, ag research technician, bestowed the traveling Spirit, Pep and Motivation Award on administrative secretary Darla White in December. In March, Darla awarded it to Yssi Entzi, nutrition lab manager, for the ways she encourages undergraduates and enriches her co-workers.



White



Entzi

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Two students and one staff member from the department were nominated for NDSU's Gunkelman Award this year. The students are Talea Furcht in the vet tech program and grad student Chutikun Kanjanaruch. Ag research tech Ron Johnson is the staff nominee. The Gunkelman Award recognizes the person who has made the most significant contribution to creating a happy campus environment.

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Gerry Erickson, a retired longtime staff member of the department, was honored at the NDSU Day of Honor memorial service on Feb. 11. The ceremony commemorated the lives of NDSU students, staff and faculty who died in 2024.



Erickson

Adriana Behl was selected for the Midwest Poultry Consortium's Center of Excellence Program. COE offers a variety of courses educating students about poultry science, lab methods and industry. Adriana is a sophomore from Spicer, Minn., majoring in animal science and pre-veterinary medicine.



Behl

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An article written by professors and graduate students associated with the department has been published in *Frontiers in Genetics*. It is titled "Multi-Trait Phenotypic Modeling Through Factor Analysis and Bayesian Network Learning to Develop Latent Reproductive, Body Conformational, and Carcass-Associated Traits in Admixed Beef Heifers," and the authors are Muhammad Anas, Bin Zhao, Haipeng Yu, Carl Dahlen, Kendall Swanson, Kris Ringwall and Lauren Hanna.

...



Molden

Todd Molden, dairy barn manager, received the NDSU Innovation in Teaching Award during fall semester. Todd teaches dairy cattle evaluation courses.

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Graduate student Omowumi Olatinwo received a fellowship to attend the International Livestock Congress in Houston in March. The ILC brings leaders from the livestock and meat industries together to discuss issues of international importance that affect the future of animal agriculture.



Olatinwo

Grad student Katrina Kratzke earned second place in the Gamma Sigma Delta poster awards at the NDSU Student Research Days. Her project was titled "Short Term Impacts of Grazing Cover Crops on Profitability and Soil Health."



Kratzke

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Samantha Ellison and Kelsey Hooker were recognized as two of the top-10 seniors in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources this year. Samantha and Kelsey are both animal science majors.



Ellison



Hooker

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For three years, Ph.D. student Kiersten Gundersen has been working with high school student Aiden Meyer from Flasher, N.D., to submit meat-science-focused projects to the North Dakota Science and Engineering Fair. This year Aiden was selected to serve as an alternate at the March 30-April 1 state contest. His project, "Seal the Deal," evaluated various packaging types on shelf-life stability in beef, pork and chicken retail cuts.

...

Dr. Lauren Hanna has been awarded the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Teaching Award of Merit. She was recognized for her excellence in teaching at the CAFSNR Annual Faculty Meeting.



Hanna

## Spring 2025 graduates

### Graduate students:

Kathlyn Hauxwell, M.S.  
(completed in December)  
Lydia Trandem, M.S.

### Undergraduate students:

#### Animal Science:

Savanna Bader  
Kalyee-Anne Barrieau  
(second major Equine Science)  
Shelby Bray  
Emma Butler  
Melanie Fosness  
Kadence Haug  
Noah Helgoe  
Sydney Hernandez  
Kelsey Hooker  
Olivia Lebrun  
Julia Marthaler  
Tayler Neft  
Jeanne Olson  
Rachel Scott  
Maddison Stamper  
Onnica Stansbury  
Lindsey Vachal  
Ellen Wengelski  
Grace Wicklund  
(second major Equine Science)

#### Equine Science:

Elisa Bichler  
Haley Maro

#### Vet Tech:

Ellen Ehresman  
Emma Pfaff  
(second major Animal Science)

## Magazine touts Bison Strides

The Bison Strides program and its director, Dr. Erika Berg, were featured in the recently published North Dakota State University Foundation magazine.

Beloved quarter horse Cutter also shared the spotlight with numerous mentions and photographs.





From left, Dakota Tierney, Maggie Waslaski, Grace Wicklund, Brooke Schwagel, Hannah Strong, Audrey Miller, Kevonna Isakson and Haley Maro stand outside the Hildebrand Equine Complex at Texas A&M University.

## Horsemen's group treks to national convention

by **Tara Swanson**  
Senior Lecturer

Eight members of the NDSU Horsemen's Association traveled to Texas for the American Collegiate Horsemen's Association National Convention, held March 26-29 and hosted by Texas A&M University.

On the way to College Station, the group made several noteworthy stops, including the Equine Aqua Spa, Tom McCutcheon Reining Horses and the Fort Worth Stockyards. During these visits, the students gained valuable insights into equine rehabilitation, reproduction and reining. They also received expert advice on how to succeed and stay involved in the equine industry.

At the national convention, participants had the chance to engage in hands-on learning labs, network with students from universities across the U.S., explore graduate school opportunities, and participate in Q&A panels with industry professionals from a

variety of equine sectors. The group also enjoyed demonstrations from the Texas A&M Mounted Cavalry, toured the Texas A&M Equine Facilities, and watched a demonstration of working cattle from horseback.

Three members of the NDSU group held national officer positions in ACHA this past year: Haley Maro (president), Maggie Waslaski (secretary), and Kevonna Isakson (director of communications). Their dedication and hard work helped propel the organization forward. Maggie will continue her leadership as the newly elected 2025-2026 national president. Additionally, adviser Tara Swanson will step into the senior adviser role for the national organization after completing her term as junior adviser for 2024-2025.

A special thank you to Texas A&M for hosting the convention and offering so many valuable learning and networking opportunities for the group!

## NDSU Equestrian Team delivers strong performance in postseason competitions

### Western:

The Western Equestrian Team advanced five riders to postseason competition after securing first or second place at the regional horse show, hosted at NDSU in February.

These riders progressed to the semifinals at West Texas A&M on March 15-16. The riders advancing included Haley Maro (Sr. – Equine Science), Audrey Miller (Sr. – Business Administration), Hannah Strong (Jr. – Equine & Animal Sciences), Julia Teiken (Jr. – Veterinary Technology), and Abby Otto (So. – Equine & Animal Sciences).

Each team member had impressive performances against some of the top riders from across the U.S. The final placings are as follows:

- *Haley Maro: Champion in Open Reining*
- *Hannah Strong: Reserve Champion in Ranch Riding*
- *Julia Teiken: 5th in Level II Horsemanship*
- *Audrey Miller: 6th in Level I Horsemanship*
- *Abby Otto: Hon. Mention in Beginner Horsemanship*

The top four riders from each class in the three semifinals advance to nationals. Haley and Hannah will move on to represent NDSU at the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association National Horse Show, held May 2-4 at Tryon International in Mill Spring, N.C. Stay tuned for updates from nationals!

**Continued on page 9**



From left, Hannah Strong, Haley Maro, Julia Teiken, Audrey Miller and Abby Otto stand with their coach, Tara Swanson.





From left, Lauren Berg, Jayden Slonaker, hunt seat team coach Mattia Gunkelman, Daedre Dawson and Katlynn Bennett celebrate their success.

## Equestrian Team rides to success at shows

From page 8

### Hunt Seat:

Four members of the NDSU Hunt Seat Team qualified for the Zone Championships in Roscoe, Ill., by placing in the top two at the regional show in early March. The four regional champions and reserve champions were Lauren Berg (Sr. – Industrial Engineering), Jayden Slonaker (Jr. – Criminal Justice), Daedre Dawson (Jr. – Equine & Animal Sciences), and Katlynn Bennett (Jr. – Veterinary Technology). The zone show was hosted by Ledges Sporting Horses on March 29.

All riders represented the NDSU Hunt Team well. The results are as follows:

- Daedre Dawson: 5th in Introductory Flat
- Katlynn Bennett: 6th in Introductory Flat
- Lauren Berg: 8th in Intermediate Fences, 8th in Intermediate Flat
- Jayden Slonaker: 10th in Limit Fences, 8th in Limit Flat

## Close encounters of the calf kind



This calf is feeling the love during Kiddie Days at Shepperd Arena. Saddle & Sirloin hosted this popular event during NDSU Ag Week in April.