



BEEF CATTLE INSTITUTE  
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

# THE GRAZIER

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HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY CATTLE. HEALTHY PLANET.

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## CALENDAR of EVENTS

**Aug. 24** - Fall Term Begins

**Sept. 11-20** - Kansas State Fair, Hutchinson, Kansas

**Sept. 17-19** - American Association of Bovine Practitioners Annual Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana

**Dates and locations coming soon!**

**Kansas Regional BQA Meetings**

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## Male Cattle Management in a Modern Beef Industry

by Heather Smith Thomas

Animal welfare issues are being discussed regarding the beef industry, including questions about whether we need to use pain medication when castrating calves. Dr. David Rethorst, director of outreach for the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University, said the challenge is finding a point where we can satisfy consumer desires and that producers can actually work into their management programs.

"Some people think we need to be using lidocaine when castrating baby calves at spring branding, but the amount of tissue that we're disrupting at that age is small," said Rethorst. Calves heal quickly at that age if surgical castration is done properly and with clean conditions.

"If a calf gets to weaning age or older before he's castrated, then there's a place for using lidocaine blocks in the testicles and some meloxicam for pain management," added Rethorst. At this point the best-case scenario is to castrate very young or not at all.

Studies show that not castrating may be a viable option. He explained, "We've done some studies with yearling bulls coming off



*Animal welfare issues are being discussed regarding the beef industry, including questions about whether we need to use pain medication when castrating calves.*

feed tests that didn't pass fertility standards. We've proven that those bulls will grade just as well as their steer counterparts with today's genetics. The meat was tested with sensory panels, taste-testing and tenderness criteria, and there was no statistical difference in the meat."

A study last summer used young bulls up to 18 months old that were going to be shipped to a feedyard. Half of the group was castrated. The castrated bulls were given steroid implants and fed a beta-agonist. Those left as bulls were not given implants or beta-agonist.

Bulls outperformed steers because of the steers' depressed feed intake during the first two weeks after castration, he reported. "The pain and stress of castration reduced their performance."

Not castrating does raise some management issues, Rethorst admitted. "How do we deal with bull calves trying to breed cows/heifers, and deal with the riding issues in pens of bulls on feed? This presents another set of challenges."

There is no easy solution, but the beef industry has tackled various issues before and come out better for it, he observed. "I am sure we can do it again; we just need to work on this. We need to recognize how much stress this puts on calves at weaning age, and how much more respiratory disease this causes,



*"Some people think we need to be using lidocaine when castrating baby calves at spring branding, but the amount of tissue that we're disrupting at that age is small," said Rethorst.*

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The\_BCI



Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University

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## Male Cattle Management (continued from front page)

and how [many] more antibiotics we have to use. We already have consumers concerned about antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance.”

Death loss is much higher among animals castrated at an older age.

“When doing BQA (Beef Quality Assurance) training,” Rethorst said, “I tell people that every time we lose a calf we are wasting resources that have been entrusted to our care. If

we lose a calf at weaning or when he goes into a feedlot, we’ve lost all the resources that have gone into getting that calf from birth to weaning, and we’ve also wasted the resources that went into taking care of his mother.”

This waste could be avoided by castrating these animals a lot younger or not at all, he concluded.

*Note: Reprinted with permission from the Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA.*

# Notable Achievements

## BCI Graduate Student Awarded Dual-Degree Scholarship

*College provides scholarship funding for those who pursue a dual-degree.*

by Audrey Hambright



*Jacob Hagenmaier, Randolph, Kansas, is a fourth-year veterinary student and BCI graduate student.*

Earning a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine takes a big commitment, but some students at Kansas State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine take it to the next level and work on a concurrent graduate degree. Making the task easier is a scholarship program offered by the college that benefits those who qualify.

Jacob Hagenmaier, Randolph, is one of two recipients of the dual-degree scholarship this year.

Hagenmaier is a fourth-year veterinary student who is pursuing a doctorate in pathobiology. His focus is beef cattle research. Originally, his aspirations of becoming a food animal veterinarian were centered exclusively on private, rural practice.

“It wasn’t until I enrolled at Kansas State University and began working part time assisting with research projects for the Beef Cattle Institute that I fully knew the different career routes that the veterinary medicine profession had to offer,” Hagenmaier said. “I soon realized research was an obvious fit for me as I have always seen myself as one to ask new questions, try new things and challenge current standards.”

In addition to taking on a challenge, Hagenmaier said the program has opened new doors.

“My doctoral research has been an extraordinary tool for networking and job opportunities within veterinary medicine,

and it has served as a springboard into understanding the process of research and development of veterinary products and services,” he said.

Dr. Dan Thomson, Jones professor of Production Medicine in the College of Veterinary Medicine, serves as Hagenmaier’s adviser.

“Jacob is a special student who is focused on serving the Kansas beef industry,” Thomson said. “He is able to see real issues that need solved within the beef industry and bring forward practical, relevant answers to be implemented in the field. He will make significant research and veterinary practice contributions.”

The philosophy of the dual-degree program brings together clinical medicine and research disciplines to create opportunities and expand career options in veterinary medicine. Started in 2011, the scholarship was established to enhance and encourage students who are part of the program. Recommendations are made from a committee within the college and then submitted to Frank Blecha, the college’s associate dean of research, for final approval and funding. Scholarship criteria include grades, GRE graduate school entry exam, letters of recommendation, the student’s demonstrated exposure to research and assurance to the committee that the student will work to complete both degrees.

“The students won’t have conducted research for long, but they have exposure and a documented interest in that part of the program,” Blecha said. “It gives us the confidence that they have the experience and success in conducting research.”

Blecha is sure this year’s recipients will do justice to the program.

“Both are very bright individuals who are directly involved with food animal research — the kind of people you’re proud to be able to support,” he said.



## KANSAS Regional Meetings

**Dates and locations coming soon!**

Watch [www.beefcattleinstitute.org](http://www.beefcattleinstitute.org) for an upcoming schedule!

# PRODUCER spotlight

## Beth Patterson

PRINGLE RANCH & PATTERSON FARMS

*Yates Center, Kansas*



*Beth Patterson takes on many roles at the family's farm and ranch located near Yates Center, Kansas.*

by Audrey Hambricht

As a fourth-generation rancher near Yates Center, Kansas, Beth Patterson of Pringle Ranch and Patterson Farms has a deep family history rooted in Kansas agriculture.

The ranch dates back to the 1890's when Patterson's great grandfather, John Pringle, moved to Woodson County, Kansas, from Arizona for "better schools and social privileges" for his eight children. His son, Jim, entered the cattle business in 1930. Patterson's father, J. Richard, expanded with a feedlot/background operation in 1973 — a business that's used to start 500 to 800 calves during the winter months.

Not only does she share a love of agriculture and the cattle industry with her family, but also for Kansas State University. Patterson along with her father, daughter and one brother hold animal science degrees from K-State. Another brother is also a graduate of the K-State family.

After receiving her degree in 1979, Patterson spent two years working "off the farm" with Monsanto Farmers Hybrid Magnum Bull Program.

"It was a super job to have after college," she said. "It was a good learning experience, and I was able to travel."

Soon after in 1981, Patterson returned to the ranch to help run it. Today, she manages the ranch along with her husband, David, and her daughter, Becky. Pringle Ranch and Patterson Farms now have 4,500 acres of grassland with another 500 acres of native bluestem hay and 700 acres of cropland that consists of wheat, corn and soybeans.

When it comes to management practices, no matter the season, Patterson is adamant that herd health comes first.

"In the summer, we're checking pastures, putting out mineral and, in the winter, we're feeding and doing fencing projects if the weather allows," she said. "But it all comes back to checking herd health."

To keep up on industry information including animal health, nutrition and marketing, Patterson makes use of the numerous

resources available to producers including publications and websites. Currently, she is working her way through the online Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training program.

"It brings you up-to-date, broadens your mind," she said. "We [producers] need to keep educating ourselves."

Staying abreast of industry information also allows Patterson to continually work towards her goals and objectives as a rancher.

Another aspect that helps Patterson stay in the know is attending meetings and being a part of industry organizations. Locally, she is a member of the Kansas Farm Bureau, Woodson County Farm Bureau, Woodson County Cattlewomen as well as the Kansas Livestock Association and currently serves on the Kansas Beef Council Executive Committee. On the national level, she is a member of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and serves as a member of the Global Growth Committee through the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

While Patterson is aware of the challenges that face the industry, she sees a lot of opportunity ahead.

"We're getting so much better about telling our story about what we do and how we do it," she said. "We're sharing our lives with the consumer so they feel better about buying our product."

Another opportunity, she added, has to do with herd health.

"Herd health management has greatly improved leading to higher quality cattle and the end result is a better beef product," she said.

For those just starting out with their own operation or even returning to the family operation, she has a few pieces of advice.

"Don't be afraid to ask questions and always seek advice from your peers, older or younger," she said. "It's important to attend educational meetings and to get involved with livestock organizations. It will keep you informed and affect the livelihood of your operation."

She knows, because she's been there and continues to grow a successful business alongside her family. While a career in agriculture may not be the easiest occupation she could have chosen, often being at the mercy of Mother Nature, it's definitely one with many rewards.

"Agriculture is my heritage," she said proudly. "I enjoy the responsibility to be the caretaker of cattle, grass and crops and being blessed to be able to make a living doing what I have a passion for. Agriculture has and always will be a changing industry. Its people are a huge asset to work with."

# RURAL practitioner

## Dr. Richard Heersche

WELLINGTON ANIMAL CLINIC

*Wellington, Kansas*



*Dr. Richard Heersche joins his family in celebrating his father-in-law's 103rd birthday celebration.*

*by Audrey Hambright*

Dr. Richard Heersche discovered the path to become a rural practitioner is often uncharted. After 42 years in practice with the Wellington Animal Clinic, he couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Raised along with five brothers on a registered Holstein farm near Mulvane, Kansas, Heersche naturally developed a passion for animals and agriculture, which led him to pursue a general agriculture degree at Kansas State University. He began working at the dairy unit where he became acquainted with Dr. Russell Frey, the veterinarian on-call. At the time Heersche had no intentions to pursue a degree in veterinary medicine, but Frey soon had a different effect.

"I admired Dr. Frey," he said. "He had a very common sense approach with cows and people, and that appealed to me.

Frey persuaded Heersche to apply for veterinary school and, to Heersche's surprise, he was accepted.

After graduating from the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1973, Heersche went to work for Dr. Earl Gatz near Pratt, Kansas, for nine months until he decided to start his own practice in 1974.

Heersche is the sole practitioner, owner and president of the mixed-animal practice located in Wellington, Kansas. He enjoys the freedom the occupation has given him to work both in and out of the office and with animals as well as the people who own them.

Through 42 years of practice, Heersche has witnessed a lot of changes, and most of those have been for the better. He has spent a significant amount of time with livestock clients on genetics and reproductive efficiencies. To supplement those practices, Heersche encourages animal handling methods and proper withdrawal times taught with Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training.

One of many fulfilling experiences involved a third generation water buffalo farmer who relocated with his wife to the United States about 20 years ago. Heersche, and a local FFA instructor helped build and develop their beef cattle herd.

"Working with him and improving his methods has been

a joy to watch," he said. "He's also taught us a few things about working with cattle."

Not only has Heersche been able to share his expertise with clients and work with animals, he also makes time for youth and local organizations.

"I'm proud to say I have helped teach quite a few students to preg-check cows who are now practicing," he said. "I try to teach the way I was taught in school. My instructors had practiced and taught in the real world, so I tried to pattern a career similar to them."

With all the experiences and relationships he has built, Heersche still gets a thrill from the day-to-day responsibilities of being a veterinarian. His advice for young or recent graduates of the profession is simple.

"Veterinary medicine is so diverse," he said. "But you have to take the good with the bad. Every time I deliver a healthy baby calf, I'm just tickled to death."

The fun part of it, he added, is creating something new and exciting.

"It's a good way to make a living," he said. "Not for the money, but to enjoy what you do for your life."



*Dr. Heersche performs a C-section on a sow for one of his beef clients.*



*Dr. Heersche preg checks a set of heifers.*

# NEWS BRIEFS

## BCI Represented at International Beef Cattle Symposium

by Audrey Hambright



Dr. Steve Bartle and Dr. Dave Rethorst of the BCI are pictured with the group of international speakers at the First Chinese National Beef Cattle Symposium.

Those who have an active part in representing and educating on practices in the beef industry know well enough that opportunities are vast and can lead you about anywhere.

This summer Dr. Steve Bartle, research director, and Dr. Dave Rethorst, outreach director for the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University, both found this to be true. Each was invited to present at the First Chinese National Beef Cattle Nutrition, Feeding and Industry Economics Symposium held in Beijing.

Representatives from all over the world joined Bartle and Rethorst at the end of June to address a wide range of industry topics ranging from sustainability, feeding, and animal health. The focus of the symposium was to emphasize more efficient practices in the Chinese beef industry and encourage higher protein diets. And in its' inaugural year, the symposium brought in 600 attendees from China made up of mostly producers, students and government officials.

According to Bartle, the chance to be a part of this

international event offered many opportunities for both the BCI and his role as research director.

"It was an honor to be invited to a world-level event," he said. "It was also important to understand the Chinese beef industry more as a growing market, plus establish relationships with their center and other international speakers."

His presentation, "Feed Processing and Utilization in Beef Cattle Feeding," addressed the advantages and disadvantages of feed processing along with cost comparison of the different methods.

Rethorst presented "Effective Prevention of Common Diseases in Feedyard Cattle," which centered on pre-conditioning of weaned calves and how respiratory disease accounts for a vast majority of illness in feedyards. Some of the most common questions, he said, were in regard to access of vaccinations for animal health.

"I hope this gives us a chance to consult with the Chinese as they expand to help with their animal health issues and increase efficiency of beef production," Rethorst said.

Aside from the symposium, they visited two beef cattle operations plus a confinement sheep operation.

You can find more photos from their trip abroad posted on the [BCI Facebook page](#).



A young worker manually feeds Simmental-influenced bulls at a confinement feeding facility near Beijing.

### BCI Student Spotlight

#### Mark Spare

**Hometown:** Ashland, Kansas

**Major:** Veterinary Medicine

**Time at BCI:** 1.5 years

**Favorite Project:** I have enjoyed working on everything we do in support of the beef industry.

**What have you learned from the BCI:** I have learned the importance of communication through teamwork, as well as an appreciation and joy for success that comes to others.

