Animal Health and Reproduction Practicum Student

Number of Credits: 6
Number of openings: 2 per term
Anticipated start date and end date: Jan to April 2022 (term 2), and May to August 2022 (summer term)

The Faculty of Land and Food Systems' (LFS) Animal reproduction and health program (ARHP) is seeking two career practicum students to support the care of dairy cows and learn operational practices at the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre (DERC) in Agassiz, BC. This is a six-credit practicum during the winter term. Students will be required to reside at the UBC DERC, however a vehicle is not required.

The ARH team consists of Master and PhD students enrolled with the UBC animal reproduction and health program, as well as visiting international students and research assistants. The student will be working alongside the ARH research team under the direct supervision of one of two graduate students who will oversee their work as Field Supervisor.

Job Description

This position is a practical career experience. Students will *not* be required to complete a research project; rather they will be participating in the day-to-day care of farm animals involved in ongoing animal reproduction and health research activities being undertaken at the UBC DERC. Students must complete the required academic components as prescribed by the Academic Supervisor for APBI 496.

The student will be working mostly in the main barn with the dairy cows. This job will consist of significant amounts of large animal handling. Students must be comfortable working with large animals.

General Dairy Farm Duties:

- Routine farm chores such as cleaning, bringing cows to milking parlor etc.
- Assisting with the daily ultrasounds of cows for reproductive health checks, collection of blood samples for ongoing projects and metritis checks/ health evaluations
- Fitting activity monitors on cows
- Scoring body condition of cows and gait scoring for lameness
- Assisting with data collection from automated technologies and data analysis
- Analyzing of blood/ lab work

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will have:

- Interest in dairy science and animal health and reproduction
- Excellent communication skills
- Patient and respectful when working with animals
- Animal handling skills; comfortable around large animals

- Be able to adapt to a changing work environment
- Attentive to details, organized, able to work in a group and to work independently at times
- Self-motivated, positive, creative, willing to learn, enthusiastic
- Able to carefully follow instructions, safety protocols, and SOPs
- Student must be prepared to work on their feet daily, with early morning or evening shifts as needed

Student Learning Components

Orientation and training

The student will receive an orientation and training from their Field supervisor, other designated individuals and from online resources. This includes:

- Students will be provided with an on-site farm orientation by the Field Supervisor. This will include a tour of the facilities and a review of site-specific safety protocols.
- Students will complete online training on cow handling and farm safety.
- Students will complete online training on animal ethics for using farm animals in experiments.

Professional Development Objectives

The objective of this career practicum is to provide hand-on experiences which will help prepare students for a future career in the dairy industry. Specifically, the practicum will address the following three professional development objectives:

1. Individuals working in the dairy industry require a general understanding of farm operations. The student will be involved in routine farm chores and will be responsible for components of these daily activities. As the UBC Dairy Centre transitions to automated systems over the next year, the student will also have exposure to how these electronic systems will be integrated into existing operations.
2. Professionals whose work overlaps with or is part of the dairy industry (i.e. veterinarians, nutritionists, agricultural inspectors, animal handlers, research technicians etc.) must be familiar with many of the common skills which will be developed in this practicum (i.e. health scoring, ultrasounds, blood sampling, physical exams, fitting monitors and tags, scoring body conditions and gait, lab work). Many of these skills are either not currently taught in APBI courses or are taught at an introductory level; therefor the practicum will allow students to develop skills that they would otherwise not have access to.
3. Professionals working in the field of animal health or reproduction (i.e. veterinarians, AI technicians, professors, research, agricultural operations) must be familiar with issues surrounding the monitoring of animal health and research activities. The student will learn about experimental design, research methods and current issues in the dairy industry with respect to animal health and reproduction. The student will develop an understanding of modern dairy farming practices.

Course Content

The academic requirements of this course are outlined in the syllabus and are available on the course wiki: (https://wiki.ubc.ca/Course:APBI496#Assessment.2C_Evaluation.2C_and_Grading)

The Field Supervisor will work with the student to identify a communications project that meets both the program needs and the student's interests. This could be in the form of a video, a training manual, a Standard Operating Procedure, or several other examples.

The successful student will work with the Academic Supervisor to ensure that assignments are approved and completed.

COVID-19 Protocols And Possible Impacts

Due to the location of the practicum as well as current COVID-19 protocols, the student must be willing to reside at the UBC DERC (student housing) which requires a minimal monthly housing fee. While students can leave the farm, off-farm activities are to be minimized; change in restrictions may happen depending on changes to public health conditions. Students selected for an interview will have an opportunity to review the safety protocols and their application at the DERC. Students must comply with the safety protocols in place throughout the duration of the course. Refusing to comply with the safety protocols could result in a removal from the practicum.

Students must note that public health circumstances may change over the duration of the practicum, which may result in some changes, including but not limited to, changes in the on-farm COVID-19 protocols, a shift in the day-to-day activities of the practicum, a complete shift to an on-line only model of practicum delivery (i.e. development of SOPs, additional communications work etc. rather than in-field activities).

Applications

Applications should be submitted to Sydney Moore at smoore12@mail.ubc.ca and include a CV, a cover letter, and contact information for 2 references (relation to applicant, position, email).