

April 1 deadline - Five \$2000 grants available

Dairy farm internships are window to future

By **SHERRY BUNTING**
Special for Farmshine

BELLEFONTE, Pa.—So how does a student get on-farm experience when planning to go into a dairy or veterinary science career, and yet hasn't grown up on a farm? Or maybe they grew up on a small farm and want to experience dairy management from the larger farm perspective? Or maybe they are pursuing an education that will lead them into the dairy industry, but their experience at home was a different agriculture enterprise?

Whatever the case may be, PDMP is offering five \$2000 dairy farm internship grant

opportunities for the summer of 2010. The grants help bring farms and students together for a shared purpose—providing a window to the future for tomorrow's dairy professionals.

Since PDMP was started, one of its goals has been to ensure the sustainability of the dairy industry by getting the next generation to continue the heritage. Another aspect of this goal is to help ag students experience the work-life of a dairy farm through a summer internship with a PDMP member. These internships are also beneficial for the farms that sign up by providing an extra set of hands without the full cost of another employee.

For Elizabethtown resident Rachel Gross, the opportunity to intern at Meadow Vista Farms, Bainbridge last summer brought her one step closer in the pursuit of her dream to become a food animal veterinarian.

That's the kind of spark that needs igniting as any effort to encourage young people to go into large animal veterinary science is sorely needed these days.

Last summer was Meadow Vista's first time having an intern work at the farm. Herd manager Justin Risser credits the PDMP grant with helping them make Rachael's dream possible.

"The only way this would have happened

is with the grant money," Justin reports, adding that internships can be tough to accomplish for many students. They want the internship experience, but they also need to raise funds for college by working full time over the summer. The grant money helps them get the experience without giving up the income.

"I think it was a really positive experience for both of us. An extra set of hands is helpful in the summer months and the PDMP grant gave the financial incentive we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise," Justin adds. "Rachael showed a deep appreciation for what we do. She worked part time with us and part time with Ag Vet Associates. She was always here with the vet during vet checks and also saw us manage the herd before the vet came in, so she had both perspectives."

Before her internship with Meadow Vista and Ag Vet Associates, Rachael had a lot of experience with horses, but no dairy experience. She didn't realize "how extensive the work is on a dairy farm as far as how much there is to manage," Justin relates. "I think we helped her leave with an idea of what it takes to run a dairy farm."

That's precisely what Rachael was looking for. As one of five PDMP Internship Grant recipients in 2009, Rachael's application essay stood out to the PDMP board.

"What I hope to gain from this internship is knowledge of Meadow Vista's inner workings, their tactics for animal care, business decisions, and what resources are taken into account to make a good decision for a dairy farm," she wrote. "I do not live on a farm and because of that and my future chosen career I want to gain knowledge on how a dairy farm works to become an informed professional. I have known the Risser Family since I was a young child and have seen their farm change so much. I would like to find out what prompted these changes and how much of a difference it made to their business."

"I want to become a food animal veterinarian and since I did not grow up on a farm I want the farmers that I assist to feel that I am credible even though I grew up in a neighborhood. I want to understand what has made Meadow Vista so successful, how they plan to expand, if they would have to... Is there anything they would change on their farm today, and what they feel is the most important thing about what they do?"

"I would also like to learn more about cow behavior and how the farm hands and managers take to the challenge of moving around these groups of 1000+ pound animals. I can learn so much from their experience..."

Rachael's essay explains vividly why dairy farm internships are so important as a window to the future for the individual students and the industry they will one day serve.

Student applications (provided on this page) are due by April 1, 2010. Now is the time to start planning with advisors because the internships are arranged individually by the student and/or the academic advisor.

Internships are not limited to students attending Pennsylvania schools or interning on PDMP member farms. But the applicant must be a resident of Pennsylvania.

PDMP members are urged to make direct contact as soon as possible with the following academic leaders to discuss an internship opportunity on their farm: Chad Dechow, Penn State, cdd1@psu.edu; Larry Morris, DelVal, larry.morris@delval.edu; Beth Kenne, Morrisville State College, kennebe@morrisville.edu; David Galton, Cornell, dmg20@cornell.edu; John Tryon, SUNY Cobleskill, tryonj@cobleskill.edu; Mike Akers, Virginia Tech, dascinfo@vt.edu.

For specific guidelines and other information, call PDMP at 877.326.5993.



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Toll-free: 877-326-5993/ Fax: 814-355-2452

Email: info@pdmp.org

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2010 PDMP Student Internship Grant Application

Student's Complete Name _____

Social Security _____ Home Phone _____ Cell (Optional) _____

Home Address _____

_____ County _____

Email Home _____ Email School _____

School _____ Semester Classification _____ Major _____

Name of Student's Academic Advisor _____

Internship arrangements with the farm are to be made by the student and/or their academic advisor.

Dairy Farm for Internship _____

Farm Contact Person _____ Farm Phone _____

Farm Address _____

Dates and Duration of Internship _____

What do you hope to achieve during your internship?

Note to Applicants: It is a requirement of the grant award that by October 1, 2010 each selected student must submit a written report about the internship experience to PDMP.

Student Intern Signature/Date

Academic Advisor Signature/Date

APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 1, 2010

Mail: PDMP, 174 Crestview Drive, Bellefonte, PA 16823-8516 / Fax: 814-355-2452