

Dairy Programs Now In A New Department Of Animal Sciences

F. Glen Hembry, Chair
Department of Animal Sciences
University of Florida, Gainesville 32611-0920

Effective February 21, 2000, M. V. Martin, UF Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, confirmed a decision that had been under study for several months, i.e., to consolidate the Department of Dairy and Poultry Sciences with the Department of Animal Science into the Department of Animal Sciences. Dr. Martin appointed me as acting chair of Dairy and Poultry Sciences on February 21 and we immediately began planning to see how to best merge all programs. The request to merge the departments was approved by the Board of Regents in June, 2000, the official date for using our new name, the Department of Animal Sciences.

The new department will retain all the areas of emphasis that the two departments previously had. That is, there will be poultry, dairy, beef and horse emphasis as well as a poultry and meat products focus. Presently, there is only a small commitment to the swine area and that, most likely, will not change. The main reason for this consolidation (merger) is to increase the efficiency of use of the entire resources (personnel, equipment, funds, etc.) of the two former departments. The dollars saved through the improved efficiencies will be returned to the Department of Animal Sciences to improve the effectiveness of the extension, teaching, and research programs. This consolidation should allow us to sharpen our focus and bring more resources together to address important issues identified by our production industry partners. I already have had the opportunity to meet with Southeast Milk, Inc. and with the statewide Dairy Advisory Committee during meetings considering the Dairy Check-off Grant proposals to identify priorities that must be maintained for us to continue the strong relationship that dairy extension, research, and teaching faculty have with the industry. Additionally, we strive to obtain industry advice on emphases needed in our research and educational programs to address changing needs in the industry and within the department.

Dr. Martin, I, the dairy science faculty, and the industry appreciate the 19 years that Dr. Roger Natzke has given to the leadership of the Dairy Science Department and the combined Dairy and Poultry Sciences Department (since 1994). It is fitting that a special recognition award from faculty and industry representatives was given to Dr. Natzke during the awards part of Dairy Production Conference (see picture inside cover). Dr. Natzke and I have also begun discussions with the Deans for Research, Extension, and Academic Programs to investigate the development of regional animal research, extension, and teaching programs or, at the very least, more informal, cooperative programs that will link our different university programs together in ways to help industry access expertise at other universities to solve production and management problems effectively. This concept has some real advantages as universities continue to deal with budgets that will not match the increasing costs of delivering programs. More and more we are seeing federal funding opportunities to support these important programs being tied to multi-state/multi-institutional efforts. One example quickly comes to mind. North Carolina State has, already in place, a Center for Animal Waste Management. By North Carolina State providing input opportunities and output information on a regional basis, we in Florida can benefit from

their leadership of this important problem area. Likewise, other institutions in other states can provide leadership in areas where they have specific expertise already in place. We believe that regional efforts are so vital to the success of our livestock and poultry industries that we are asking Dr. Natzke to help the University of Florida facilitate regional efforts.

The Dairy Business Analysis Project (DBAP) might be an example of a project with regional opportunities and, most definitely, is an example of a project that requires collaborative efforts of the industry and the universities. The DBAP approach to assisting the dairymen of the state was developed through the cooperative efforts of county extension faculty, state dairy extension specialists and the Florida dairy industry with some funding for the initial effort coming from the Dairy Check-off Program. Over a number of years DBAP was researched, tested and refined until an effective product was developed. Recently, with the departure of key individuals from the University and also in keeping with the mission of researching new areas and developing new products, a decision was made to move the analysis portion of DBAP to the private sector. This allows the dairymen to receive the same level of service through DBAP and it also allows the department to continue the research and educational mission by researching and developing educational materials in new, important areas for the dairy industry. Our county extension faculty will continue to be available to work with each dairyman to collect the data to submit for analysis and to interpret the results from the Dairy Business Analysis.

The consolidation of our animal production departments into a combined Animal Sciences Department will not be difficult conceptually. The University of Florida had a similar organizational structure for these programs in 1949 from which we later split to provide closer identity with the state's animal industries but maintained combined core curricula and graduate programs for the Ph.D. Degree (see historical chronology that follows). Most other Land Grant Universities maintain their dairy programs in combined animal science departments with some difference in the specific name of the departments; the names Department of Animal Science and Department of Animal Sciences are most common. We chose the Department of Animal Sciences as our new name.