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UT INSTITUTE OF
Agriculture
News for Employees, Students & Friends September 2006

Join in the fun at the State of the University Celebration, Sept. 19, and Ag Day, Sept. 23

INSTITUTE STUDIES ISSUE OF VET AVAILABILITY

Large-animal veterinarians face demanding, intense fieldwork as they provide medical services for farm animals. They tend to work longer hours and under more difficult conditions than their counterparts in small-animal practices. These factors, plus economics (veterinarians enter practice with an average of $80,000 of student loan debt), seem to be causing many prospective large-animal practitioners to seek other career opportunities.

The Institute of Agriculture, at the request of the Tennessee General Assembly House Agriculture Committee, has launched **a study into**

Continued, page 3

UT CONTRIBUTES TO ADVANCES FOR COMBATING SUDDEN OAK DEATH, SOYBEAN ROOT ROT

Researchers are closing in on solutions to thwart two major plant pathogens, and a graduate student in the UT-ORNL Genome Science and Technology Program is among the contributors, as is his academic mentor, Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology Kurt Lamour.

.Alon Savidor, a Ph.D. candidate with the UT-ORNL Genome Science and Technology Program, and Lamour are listed among the co-authors of a paper in the September 1st issue of *Science*.

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CASNR DEAN SEARCH UNDERWAY

Recently I sent out an announcement regarding the initiation of the CASNR Dean search. At this point the committee has held its first meeting, and we are in the midst of selecting a search firm to assist us with the process.

It has been my experience that the more involved we all are in the process the more likely we will complete a successful search that yields an outstanding new dean. I'd ask that you take the time needed to be engaged in the process. We have special plans to keep you abreast of developments through a search Web site. In addition please take the time to provide feedback to the search committee regarding nominations for the position when requested. And, by all means do not be reluctant to provide your perspective to the committee when we interview candidates.

I appreciate the willingness of Dr. Alan Mathew to serve chair of the committee and to all who have agreed to serve with him. I am looking forward to the process unfolding, and we'll keep you posted of developments. Should you have questions about the search, feel free to contact me.

All the best,

Joe

third thursday

DEBATES OVER RURAL VETS INVOLVE MANY ISSUES

Robert E. Holland, professor and head, Large Animal Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

Holland received the Distinguished Postdoctoral Veterinary Alumnus Award from Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. The award was conferred during the college's commencement ceremony in May in East Lansing, MI.

Robert E. Holland

During the past decade, debates regarding the availability of what is now referred to as food supply veterinary medicine have intensified. Increasingly, concerns have been published in lay journals about the lack of veterinarians engaged in rural practice, and numerous articles have been published in refereed professional journals addressing the perceived adequacy of food animal veterinarians versus increases or decreases in demand for their services. Controversial aspects of the debate, to mention a few, have focused on whether or not the increasing number of women in the profession has contributed to the lack of rural veterinarians, urbanization of rural communities, professional student debt rebates, and altering admission requirements to admit more rural students. While less controversial in scope, but more accurate in depicting the real situation are the cost of obtaining a professional education, limited profit margins received by small producers, and animal density as it relates to practice efficiency. Often lost in the debates are the economic realities of production animal agriculture and the influences of consolidation of production units, loss of the family farm concept, evolution of hobby farms, and environmental stewardship. Economic viability for the producer must be supported if a prosperous sector is to exist that will support a rural veterinary practice in the community.

Without question, the practice of rural veterinary medicine is undergoing change. Tennessee is no exception to the influences of this change. In March 2006, Dr. Michael Blackwell, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) were asked by the Tennessee House Agriculture Committee to assess the veterinary workforce in Tennessee and to determine the impact of veterinary medicine on Tennessee's economy. As a result of those requests two studies have been proposed. For study one, TVMA staff and veterinarians in collaboration with Dr. Holland, Drs. Kim Jensen and Burt English in the Department of Agriculture Economics have designed a survey instrument that will assess the conditions and the needs of veterinary practices and the expectations of veterinarians across the state. Ms. Linda Daugherty, program director of UT's Social Science Research Institute will conduct the telephone survey as part of this study. A second study designed by Drs. Jensen and English will determine the impact of veterinary medicine on Tennessee's economy.

In addition to the proposed surveys, three recent forums were sponsored by the University of Tennessee's Institute of Agriculture. A forum has been held in each of the three grand divisions of the state. The purpose of the forums was to provide stakeholders an opportunity to provide input into documents that will be presented in November to the State Legislature for review.

ON THE AIR ON WNOX

Knoxville area radio station **WNOX FM 100.3** continues to feature a number of UTIA faculty members. **Sue Hamilton** and **Beth Babbit** of Plant Sciences host the "The Garden Girls" program every Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. EST. The show covers a range of topics and features public horticulture students and guests. This fall, the "Ask the Vet" radio show will interview CVM faculty **Joe Bartges**, Sept. 17, **Michael Blackwell** and **Melissa Kennedy**, Oct. 1, and **Elizabeth Strand**, Oct. 29. That program airs from 10 a.m. to noon EST. Each can be listened to live via the Internet through www.wnoxnewstalk.com/.

4-H HOSTS SOUTHERN LEADER FORUM

When Tennessee hosts the **Southern Region Volunteer Leader Forum** in October, don't look for workshops on the schedule. Instead it's "funshops" that approximately 650 enthusiastic, dedicated **adult 4-H volunteers** will take part in, as they gather to learn, take new ideas back home, and have fun.

The purpose of the forum is to increase the capacity of volunteer and salaried staff to contribute to the achievement and mission of 4-H Youth Development and the Cooperative Extension System.

Participants are expected from 13 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Tennessee's delegation will number about 120. The event takes place Oct. 5-8 at Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Eatonton, Georgia.

The Tennessee 4-H Performing Arts Troupe will perform, and **Amy Gallimore**, UT Extension specialist, 4-H, will serve as one of the featured speakers. **Carmen Burgos**, Extension specialist, 4-H, is coordinating the program with the help of 4-H agents, volunteers, and state 4-H staff. UT hosts the forum every 13 years.

VET AVAILABILITY, *from page 1*

Tennessee's situation with regard to large-animal veterinarians and to determine why their numbers are apparently declining in a state that boasts one of only 28 colleges of veterinary medicine in the nation.

Issues to be studied include how animal health care impacts the quality and cost of food as well as the overall future of the state's economy. Veterinarians help maintain the safety and wholesomeness of food animal products and minimize the public's risk of contracting a foodborne illness. They also serve as sentinels for animal disease outbreaks.

The potential importance of their contributions is easy to see in the state's economic statistics: animal-based agriculture contributes 50 percent of the state's more than $2 billion agricultural economy. Tennessee's cattle industry alone is estimated to amount to more than 2.1 million head.

The state's swine and poultry industries also contribute a combined $483 million to producers' coffers, the bulk of which comes from broiler production. The health of these species is of particular concern as they are considered watch species for the transfer of disease to humans.

Large companion animals are affected, too. The state's equine industry (horses, donkeys and mules) accounts for another 210,000 animals.

As part of its analysis of the situation, and to solicit input for public policy recommendations, the Institute conducted **three public forums** across the state for citizens to voice their concerns. A listening panel comprised representatives from UTIA and of state government and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture heard presentations from interested parties and, when appropriate, responded with questions. Groups presenting their positions included the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, Tennessee Farmers' Cooperative, and the Tennessee Veterinary Medicine Association. Private individuals also had their say. The sessions drew a combined total of 162 participants.

A transcript from each forum is being compiled. It will be used as part of the overall study as well as provided to the House Agriculture Committee to serve as a benchmark for policymakers on this issue in future years.

The UT Office of State Relations helped organize the forums.

CONTRIBUTIONS, *from page 1*

The paper compares the complete genome sequences of two major plant pathogens: Sudden Oak Death and soybean root rot disease. Both of these pathogens are among 59 *Phytophthora* species that are common adversaries of agricultural crops and trees and shrubs. *P. infestans* was responsible for the mid-19th century Irish potato famine and other *Phytophthora* species threaten production on large-scale farms and in backyard gardens alike.

The species addressed in current Science paper are *P. ramorum*, which causes Sudden Oak Death, and *P. sojae*, which attacks primarily soybeans.

TENNESSEE TO STAR AT SUNBELT

Tennessee is the featured state at this year's **Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition** in Moultrie, GA, and the state's exhibit promises to spotlight all the best that the state has to offer visitors and investors alike.

In "Tennessee: The Stage Is Set for You!" Sunbelt Expo visitors will enjoy a 6-minute video and exhibit areas that highlight how the stage is set in Tennessee for vacations and agriculture and Tennessee-made products as well as educational and business opportunities. Live Internet links that will allow them to virtually explore the state, and a live Tennessee Walking Horse will add an interactive touch. A front-porch setting will offer Sunbelt explorers an opportunity to rest tired feet. Cool Tennessee spring water will be on hand to quench their thirst.

The Sunbelt Expo is the world's largest farm show with on-site row crops and field demonstrations. During the show's three days, Oct. 17-19, the latest technology from the agricultural industry will be on display at the show grounds and 600-acre working farm. For complete information about the Sunbelt Expo, visit www.sunbeltexpo.com.

The Tennessee exhibit is sponsored by UT Extension and the Institute of Agriculture, along with Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension Program, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and the Tennessee Departments of Agriculture, Economic and Community Development, Environment and Conservation (State Parks) and Tourist Development. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are also exhibit sponsors. Associate Dean **Tim Cross** of UT Extension heads the planning team.

Tennessee's candidate for Sunbelt Farmer of the Year is **Bob Willis** of Hillsboro, who oversees a successful 4,500-acre operation with emphasis on variety.

GUATEMALA MISSION PROBES LOCAL NEEDS

Water shortages in a land of abundant rainfall, centuries-old farming practices, and no-till corn growing on steep mountain slopes—these were just a few of the circumstances that a **team from the Institute found on an outreach trip to Guatemala** in August. Five faculty members traveled to the country at the request of Institute donors Kelly and Beverly Milam to conduct an appraisal of village needs in several diverse communities served by Health Talents International (HTI), a medical outreach organization.

Team members were soil scientist **Neal Eash**, climatologist **Joanne Logan**, rural sociologist **Bob Orr**, animal scientist **Kelly Robbins**, and soil scientist **Forbes Walker**.

The team was asked to visit several of the communities with HTI medical clinics and suggest possible ways to assess their needs and opportunities for improving community health. HTI requested that the potential solutions be development oriented, culturally acceptable, focused on a felt need, teachable to the marginally educated, and use available resources that can be renewed or replenished.

The team found water-related issues to be among the most important challenges facing villagers in their daily lives. Another problem was a high disease rate among poultry, which, in turn, contributed to protein deficiencies in people's diet.

The team is finalizing its report and the recommendations it will make to HTI. One of the possible solutions to address the shortage and quality of water for household use is water harvesting by roof catchment, such as using bamboo for guttering. Some delegation members are also exploring ways to integrate the needs identified during the trip into their classroom teaching. Forbes Walker, for instance, is interested in experimenting with rainwater collection systems that make use of locally available material. "It's one of several projects that biosystems engineering students in the senior-level capstone course are considering," Walker said.

Bob Orr said potential follow-up trips to Guatemala may include faculty with less international experience.

UTIA Events & Happenings

September 14-17, **CVM Southern Region Leadership Conference**
www.spayneuterconference.org/

September 19, **State of the University Celebration**
http://future.tennessee.edu/

September 23, **UTIA Ag Day 2006**
http://agday.tennessee.edu/

September 28-30, **CVM American Humane Association Annual Conference**
http://tinyurl.com/lokcu

September 29-30, **CVM Small Animal Ultrasound Seminar & Wet-Lab**
www.vet.utk.edu/continuing_ed/

October 5, **Northeast Tennessee Beef Expo**
http://tobacco.tennessee.edu/events/

October 5-6, **CVM Animal Control Association of Tennessee Conference**

October 14, **Heritage Festival**
http://tinyurl.com/nemuz

October 14-15, **CVM Large Animal Reproductive Surgery Seminar & Wet-Lab**
www.vet.utk.edu/continuing_ed/

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