

## Reciprocal Meats Conference Offers Perspective on Career Opportunities

by Sara Guillen

Lincoln, Nebraska hosted the American Meat Science Association's 68th Reciprocal Meat Conference (RMC), earlier this month. With over 700 attendees, RMC is one of the largest gatherings of meat scientists ranging from undergraduate students to industry leaders. Each year this conference not only allows for participants to exchange new information, but creates a homecoming environment for this community to rekindle old and establish new friendships.

Though I was the new kid on the block, the amiable atmosphere had me feeling at home amongst friends within the first few hours. Our trip began with 12 passengers in two university vans and a cargo trailer. Over the course of three days, we had the amazing opportunity to explore the journey beef makes from the feedlots to a delicious steak. Our stops included Tyson Beef Plant in Dakota City, USDA Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, and Will Feed, INC, feedlot in Conrad Nebraska. For an animal science pre-vet student, it was an interesting realization to see how many areas animal health and nutrition could be applied. As someone new to the industry, I was also astounded by the plethora of fields and expertise from industrial engineering to supply chain management. Only then did I truly start to appreciate the mounds of career opportunity a person can have in the animal

science and meat science industry. These opportunities became more apparent throughout RMC.

With guest from many different universities and companies around the US and the world, it is easy to see why RMC is the best place to learn and explore the continuously growing industry. Students begin to network in a team building activity known as Iron Chef - a culinary competition that not only helps students bond but lets them delve into the world of product research and development. With this kick start event, students continue their journey in the participation of Meat Quiz Bowl Competition, the career fair, student networking breakfast, and the student picnic. Along with networking, the conference promotes exploration of the industry through diverse topic sessions such as food microbial studies or the

changing societal views. The networking activities and the RMC sessions foster the perfect atmosphere for students to connect with fellow students (someday fellow colleagues) and industry professionals. Though veterinary school is the next step in my career, RMC allowed me to discover different paths in the animal science industry, whether as a veterinarian or an industry professional. As one of my classmates, Emily Hasenauer perfectly stated, "There is such a diversity of backgrounds that come to RMC and being able to interact with leaders of our meat industry is incredible; the relationships created and lessons learned will benefit us for years to come." }

*Sara is a senior Pre-vet Animal Science major from Siloam Springs, Ark. Thank you to the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association for sponsoring the Meats Quizbowl team.*



The Meats Quizbowl team enjoyed a stop at the Well's Ice Cream counter during a tour of the plant.

## Animal Science Student Interns at Thailand Zoo

*Animal Science junior Rachel Want is from Cadiz, Kentucky. She is currently participating in a 5 week internship.*

Q: Who are you interning for?

A: Safari Park and Open Zoo (specifically I'm on the Big Cat Team) in Kanchanaburi, Thailand

Q: What are your responsibilities?

A: I am responsible for helping to feed all the big cats in my area which are lions and leopards. We also clean all their enclosures daily. We constantly make new toys and activities as enrichment for the cats to keep their minds working. With the younger

cats we work hands on and clicker train them to move from place to place and do simple tricks like sit and lay down so that they can be safely handled by humans.

Q: So far, what are the best parts?

A: The best part for me is seeing the cats enjoy the toys we make and also being able to cuddle up with and pet the younger leopards. You always have to remember they are still wild animals, but I'm very comfortable around them.

Q: Is there anything you have found challenging?

A: Not too much has been challenging, but building new log platforms for the

cats to climb on is pretty hard work.

Q: Have you learned anything that has surprised you?

A: I was quite surprised at how willing the cats are to learn new things. They are extremely bright and food motivated so they can be trained like dogs. They really enjoy the human interactions as well, because they have been bottle fed since they were little babies.

Q: Anything else to add?

A: Being able to see immediate results of my work is very encouraging. Also just the experience of seeing a new culture so different from my own is teaching me a lot. }