

2007-08 Senior Ag-Interested Student Survey

JM Gay 5/29/08

Following are the results from my survey of the 2007-08 ag-interested. My goal was to obtain information from ag interested senior students at the end of their clinical year on their perspective having experienced the clinical year. I was motivated to put this survey out by two things. First, I was aware of the concern that the underclassmen have with the imbalance between the number of small animal blocks that are required vs. the number of ag animal blocks. Second, I became aware that some ag interested seniors were telling ag interested underclassmen that the senior wasn't so bad, that they learned useful things in all blocks. So, being an epidemiologist, I wanted to obtain some evidence. I also wanted to bounce some ideas for some additional experiences off of them, expecting that they might be overkill. To gather information on how they viewed their senior year having experienced it as well as what they thought of some potential opportunities, I constructed and sent them an e-mail questionnaire on April 14, 2008 and two follow-up reminders, the last the Monday before graduation.

To identify which students were ag-interested, I made a list of all the students who had taken one or more elective ag blocks in the 2007-08 senior year, which yielded 28 students enrolled in one or more elective ag animal related blocks (Caine Center, Bovine Therio and so on). One student responded that they were a Caribbean student who hadn't been here long enough to comment and the e-mail bounced from another Caribbean student's e-mail box because it was over its size limit, leaving 26 potential respondees. Fourteen students responded directly with comments and I've pasted their responses verbatim into the attached Word document, my questions in bold italic. Two other students didn't respond but made applicable comments in Caine Center evaluations and I've appended those comments at the bottom. The number of responses per question is variable. I was surprised by the results.

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*Now that your clinical year is almost over and you've taken at least one elective ag animal rotation, **I need your help**. Last year the Dean asked me to coordinate (small "c") managing and revising the agricultural animal curriculum. Hence, I really need your feedback on what is working well and what isn't so that we can keep what is and fix what isn't in, both the general curriculum and in that specific to agricultural animals, whether at WSU, Caine Center or preceptorships. In contrast to the Official CVM Exit Survey, the following is for specific information from a specific student group's experience. Before I pass your comments along, I will combine them and will remove student names and other identifiers. **You can respond via replying to this e-mail or print it up as a Word document and anonymously slipping it under my door (2005 ADBF) or putting it in my department mailbox.***

14/26 students 5/14/08

Every student response is below in their entirety and in scrambled order

What type of practice with what species balance do you intend to be in within the next 5 years?

(For example – mixed practice with 30% cow-calf, 30% equine and 40% small animal)

- Small animal- I originally wanted to do mixed practice but could not find a suitable job in the area I wanted to live
- 50% cow calf 40% equine 10% small animal
- Mixed with about 60% large (cattle) 20% small animal and 20% equine
- 100% Large animal; dairy and small ruminant about 40:60 and will hopefully remain about 50:50
- Mixed animal with 80% cattle work (split 50-50 between dairy and beef) and 20% small animal and equine

- 100% Large Animal Practice consisting of 80-90% dairy and the remainder being equine and beef cattle work.
- Doing an internship next year - not sure if I will go residency route or not; if I don't, then I hope to be in a mixed practice with variable balance, but to include at least 20% small ruminant...
- 60-70% small animal, 30-40% small ruminant
- mixed (50% small animal - 25% equine, 25% bovine)
- 90% Equine 10% Ruminant
- 70-100% equine (+/- some small ruminants/camelids, and maybe small animal)

Please respond to the following questions (and add comments for those questions I should've asked but didn't!) about current rotations:

1. What advice about rotations would you pass along to third year students interested in ag animals?

- Go to the Caine Center, get as much SIPE/Preceptorship experience as you can at practices with ambulatory services.
- Ag animal at WSU has a very small case load and rounds were few and far between, it was kind of a vacation rotation, take the minimal requirement here and seek outside externships. The Preventative Med block at the Caine Center was fantastic, a lot of hands and the chance to work up cases by yourself- being over seen by clinician but you make all the calls. The amount I learned at the Caine Center by far exceeded my expectations. One month was the perfect time
- Do anything you can away from the school. ie. SIPES and Caine Center blocks
- Spend as much time away from WSU as you can, i.e. at the Caine Center, SIPES, etc. Because that is where you get the most experience working with ag animals.
- Fool around with your PCAs and SIPEs so that you get as much ag in as possible, and don't get stuck with extra SA rotations.
- Take as many rotations as possible away from Pullman either Caine Center, or private, Unless the calving block is changed it is of little value if you already have basic calving experience.
- Schedule as many SIPEs as you can along with spending vacation time to schedule additional time with vets out in practice. If you choose your SIPEs wisely you can gain a lot of valuable experience in real world situations. I also found my preceptor to be very good (Lewiston) but at certain times of the year it may have been slower due to a large portion of the work being beef cattle (I did mine in March).

I would also recommend that all students interested in large animal medicine take diagnostics. It is very important to know how to do a good necropsy. It was amazing how much information I learned on this block.

- Take a rotation or two at the Caine Center, it was an excellent learning experience. Otherwise get experience elsewhere because the training/case load at WSU is inadequate.
- The Caine Center is great, other wise to get really any experience you will need to us your SIPE's
- It wasn't clear to me when scheduling my fourth year that we could take any rotation more than twice. I think it is important for ag and mixed interest students to know that they can take the same rotation multiple times. I found this out later and took two more equine medicine rotations than I initially signed up for. I would have taken more ag if all the small animal wasn't required. I can't comment on Caine Center rotations because I didn't go on any.

- try to take more than one rotation of AG animal since it is hard to gauge when it will be busy. Also doing rotations at the Caine Center, especially the small ruminant/lambing block and independent rotations are very beneficial

2. Which rotations did you find the most useful and why?

- Canine Center- see above, externships- one on one mentorship good discussions of cases, preceptorship- (Kulshan) a lot of palpation practice, DAs, etc. Was allowed to do DA's by myself.
- Bovine therio- a lot of great experience and instruction. I only wish it was a four week block. Diagnostics- I believe this block should be required for Ag animal practitioners. A good necropsy is essential. Caine Center calving block- pretty much all Caine Center blocks are great for the hands on experience with the instruction. It is a good blend between private practice and academia.
- General therio block- case load was small but other opportunities with the teaching herd were made available, I gained a lot from this rotation, especially ultrasounding small ruminants.
- Actually one of the most useful rotations in vet school wasn't even a large animal rotation but rather small animal medicine (referral). It was good rotation to help you work on your problem solving abilities. I felt I learned a lot of information that could in some way be applied to large animal medicine. I also found the general large animal and equine theriogenology blocks to be excellent. Even though a fair amount of the general block was dealing with camelids which I don't really have any interest in- but I did get to work on my ultrasound skills. Dr. Tibary goes out of his way to make sure that students are exposed to and get to do procedures that we will be expected to do once we get out of here.
- All of the medicine rotations were most useful, because you seemed to be asked for the most input from clinicians in these rotations.
- Dr. Tibary's therio rotation was great - he lets you do a lot of hands on learning. Wish the other ag rotations would have been as hands on - think that is the only rotation where I was able to do surgery more than once. Also, only rotation where I was able to do ultrasound.
- The Caine Center small ruminant block because it was hands on, higher volume, and we went out to farms.
- My preceptorship and my SIPEs. I learned lots of practical skills, increased my surgical skills, and was able to practice communication with clients. These were by far the best learning experiences in my 4th year.
- I would suggest that student perception is generally (for those going into LA practice) negative in terms of the minimalist approach that the university takes towards Ag Animal. Most of my classmates feel that the weighting of the system towards SA is unfair and biased and that they are considered second class citizens for choosing a career in Ag Animal. I think the block itself is good (the clinicians are helpful, great stimulators of thought and good mentors) but the opportunity to get "real life" experience is low.
- Preceptorship, Sipes the clinicians actually allowed for you to truly work up the cases and treat accordingly as well as do all the hands on care, instead of waiting in the pecking order of clinician, resident, intern. (Ag was also good, just a light case load during my time)
- Both general therio and equine therio were useful for large animal practitioners. We did lots of cow and alpaca work even on the equine rotation.

- Equine theriogenology, Caine Center Bovine repro special project blocks, Diagnostics, and anesthesia all because the students actually got to do something and practice technical skills.
- I did numerous equine rotations to try and maximize the chances of seeing different cases. The large animal ICU/ER overnight rotation was very helpful (especially because we saw such a variety of cases). I think that the beef calving block would be beneficial for people that aren't familiar with that process (as I was), but for people that grew up on cow-calf operations it wasn't as useful.

3. Any rotations that you found were useless and why?

- Ag animal at WSU- Time was wasted when case load was minimal. Time could have been spent talking about herd management, visiting the dairies/swine center, holding topic rounds, etc. There was also too many students for the number of cases
- I learned something on every rotation.
- Small animal orthopedics, neurology, equine orthopedic surgery- The surgeries performed at these rotation were so specific that even a small animal or equine practitioner would not do them in general practice let alone an ag animal\rural mixed practitioner. The six weeks spent there could have been used much more efficiently. Basically students are in these rotations to fill the space. Oncology is another one that is very specific. While I was on small animal medicine, most of my patients were cancer patients here for treatment. I was just there to fill out the paper work and TPR the patient.
- None
- Small animal soft tissue surgery, orthopedic surgery, equine surgery, referral medicine, preceptorship at Pilchuck were all almost useless because you spend the majority of your time watching, doing paper work, patient care that is actually technician work, and waiting around for something to happen.
- not really
- I did the Caine Center calving block (3rd block down there) and the heifers that we were calving were bred to longhorn bulls. Only one minor pull and one prolapse. So the only experience I got was riding around rough fields all night tagging calves. But the food in the bunkhouse was really good- I gained 20lbs in 2 weeks. I think it may have been beneficial for someone who had no or little experience with cattle. I was really expecting to get to do a few c-sections while I was down there- we did get to do one at the Caine center prior to going to Grandview.
- Surgical - don't get asked for your input much, and don't get to be as involved in cases.
- Small animal orthopedic surgery and equine surgery. It is nice to become familiar with options for fracture repair, etc. but we don't actually get to do anything useful. On both these rotations I felt more like a tech than a future veterinarian.
- Small animal soft tissue surgery and orthopedic surgery should not be required courses.
- I don't think so.
- Actually on my beef calving rotation we really didn't get to do any obstetrics due to the lateness of when I had the rotation (it was all clean-up bull bred heifers and they didn't have any problems) so for that it was pretty pointless, but for me not having any kind of experience with those types of operations, I would not say it was completely useless. We did get a lot of experience with neonatal support/ICU calf care.

4. Any rotations that had too much caseload that it overwhelmed the learning?

- This question depends on the time of year. For me, none of my blocks were too busy; for others, maybe

- not in this hospital
- Small animal orthopedics, Equine surgery. Felt more like a tech and didn't have enough time to delve into the literature
- No
- I didn't feel that any of my large animal rotations were overwhelming. A couple of nights on the ICU shifts it got a little hectic but not overwhelming. The same goes for small animal medicine (referral).
- None for me
- Never a problem, if anything low case loads were a problem.
- While I was on both Equine Surgery with Dr. Schneider and Small animal referral medicine we had very large case loads that made learning difficult. The difference between the two was that the Sm. Animal ref. have very strictly scheduled rounds that occur each morning to guarantee some learning occurs during the rotation, but due to the overwhelming detail that is required on their SOAPS I spent many sleepless hours looking up details of all the different abnormalities in a set of blood work that was not, at least for me personally, a productive way to learn and retain any new information. Equine surgery we just didn't have time for rounds or anything besides shuttling horses from stall to lameness exam to MRI to stall etc. so really the only thing I truly got out of it was becoming proficient at my physical exam.
- Referral medicine and equine surgery

5. Any rotations that had too little of the right caseload for learning?

- I would have liked to see the ag animal rotation with more cases, but given the location of the vet school it is understandable.
- Ag animal
- I was on ICU overnights at a slow time, so we didn't have many cases to apply emergency medicine with.
- WSU ag animal rotation
- Yes - it seemed as though you had to "fight" for cases sometimes - Ag animal, Neurology, Cardiology.
- ag animal, (very few cattle)
- Large animal overnight, we had no new cases come in again this could be due to timing (First part of January)
- Ag animal
- I feel that Ag. Animal and Equine Medicine had too little of the right caseload. It was really slow while I was on Equine Medicine with only about 1 case per student. Many of these cases we post-colic surgery patients which pretty much just amounts to babysitting. I had a total of about three and a half weeks Ag. Animal and it was pretty slow also. We had a few lame cows that were pasture pets (if they would have belonged to a producer they would have been Big Macs) and the
- Both ag and equine medicine don't always have a lot of cases.
- I didn't have this experience, but I have heard the SM. animal ortho rotation can sometimes be just TPLO's/cr. cruciate ruptures for the whole rotation, which limits the thought process toward other orthopedic diseases.
- Ag animal

6. What rotation learning experiences were there too much of?

- paperwork, walking dogs, feeding dogs, crushing bute to give to horses. The small animal blocks (particularly the more specialized ones like surgery) should not be

required for students going into ag or mixed just as ag is now going to be an elective. It wastes too much of the year when we could be doing other useful things.

- None- I didn't feel like there were any rotations where there were too many learning experiences.
- we had plenty of small animal experiences
- I think that a lot of the paper work is redundant, especially in small animal. I would say we spent at least 1/3 of our time filling out paper work, some days even more. An example, if one has an animal in ICU, each day you end up writing the exact same PE findings in three different places. We spend a lot of time walking dogs also, and not just patients but dogs that are boarding.
- Small animal surgery - ortho and soft tissue and equine surgery
- -?-
- Assisting surgery and patient care in the small animal courses. We are here to learn, but on these rotations we were just free labor.

7. *What rotation learning experiences were there not enough of? What important things are missing from rotations?*

- bovine palpation- i was not able to take the elective and palpated fewer than 50 cows on ag animal, which I took twice.
- We really need an ambulatory ag animal/equine service here to get a better idea of the practical things that we will be doing when we get out into practice.
- As stated above, there are some rotations where you don't feel like you are involved. Think it really depends on the clinicians - some seem so stressed out or in a rush that they would rather just take over everything.
- Except for the 4 good rotations (mentioned earlier) the glaring hole in 4th year clinical experience is any kind of hands on experience in basic general practice type cases that we will see in nearly every day in private practice. Some good examples: beef work of any kind, lameness work in cows, C-sections, uterine prolapses, bloat, choke, cancer eyes, hernias, equine dentals, nerve blocks, wound management, castrations, hernias, cryptorchids. The list goes on.
- Not enough cattle work. Cases that you will see every day.
- Definitely need more hands on technical skill emphasis as well as allow to truly think independently and come up with ideas for treatment and diagnostic tests instead of just following the typical norm. Also need more practical cases the everyday type of problems and ideally farm calls.
- On the ag rotation, we didn't do much to learn about taking care of a herd as a whole. It would also be a good idea to teach the students about basic herd care and USDA requirements for sale and transport.
- Radiograph taking, primarily for equine/large animal
- I felt that Equine medicine was lacking in that you were not allowed to rectal horses especially colics. I know that they are client owned horses but I don't feel that letting one interested student palpate the horse under the direction of the clinician is going to cause any harm. I saw instances where 3 or 4 interns or residents palpated the horse but no students. It would be nice to let one student palpate, instead of an additional 2 or 3 residents. I also felt like we could have palpated the teaching herd horses- which we were able to do on Equine therio.
- Hands on experience and decision making about the cases. There are a few clinicians that asked what I would do or how I would handle the case, but most don't.

Comment on some potential learning experiences: (e.g., would these BHAG's (big hairy audacious goals) be advantageous and useful or would they be disadvantageous and duplicate what is already being done – if you think they are nutty ideas, please say so!):

1. During the WSU ag animal rotation (now 4 weeks) spending several day trips working up individual sick cattle with a WSU clinician in the sick pen of a large dairy or feedlot with about 5 animals per student per day

- This would be an excellent choice! I wish I could have done this as a senior.
- This would be helpful and would add more substance to the current rotation, perhaps > 5 animals per student if possible. Good opportunity to visit farms and discuss herd health and production cycles
- Yes this would be good
- I feel it is a good idea to get away from the school. There is so much to learn away from here. I feel it is important to see a wide array of places and things. Maybe visit a few different dairy's or feedlots (I know not many exist in the NW). This will allow students to see a wide array of management practices etc.
- More outings into the real world would always be an advantage.
- Yes, useful - was able to do this on a few days this year and thought it was useful.
- Excellent idea.
- This would be great because it is actually practical!!!!
- This would be useful.
- probably more productive than most AG animal rotations now

2. Any ideas for other things to include in this or the other ag animal rotations? Exclude?

- It would be nice to look at herd problems also.
- setting goals of general basic technical competencies and get the chance to actually practice them. All "Ag" work should not be on alpacas...this is a very area specific animal and most of the ag students are not going to an area where this is the predominant type of case.
- Get Dr, Chris Schneider from U of I involved - the bovine therio block was EXCELLENT and I highly recommend it. It will get you more bovine experience in one day than four weeks at WSU
- More lambing/calving/kidding on farms.
- In the spring help a rancher work calves or calf raising ranch. The more people you visit with and the more aspects of the livestock industry you visit the more you realize what is important to each farm or sector. This will allow you to be a better veterinarian and let you understand where the producer is coming from when a problem arises
- Ambulatory appointments would be great. Some of us have chosen not to become ag animal practitioners because we don't know how to handle/treat cattle in a farm situation.
- Bovine therio really should be part of the ag animal rotation. It is such a large part of large animal medicine.
- Similar things related to small ruminants would be good. Also if there was a way to visit more alpaca farms to get an idea of how people house these animals for people who don't have that experience.

3. If the core is reduced by 20%, having a two week period in the middle of each semester for short, intense electives (e.g., advanced reproductive endocrinology, ruminant physiology, veterinary ruminant nutrition, applied ag animal economics,

small ruminant medicine, technical experience electives (see below) without any core classes in the two weeks.

- Great idea, I would have like to receive more nutrition and small ruminant medicine training. Training with dairy computer record systems would have been great, perhaps that could be covered on the ag rotation.
- Yes, would be useful.
- I like the idea of getting out of the classroom and getting some hands-on experience
- I don't know if it is necessarily a good idea unless you are required to pick one of the electives. Personally, I don't take electives because I am tired and I hate sitting in a classroom. I don't learn well in that type of environment. I would be better to have more options for practical ag animal experience during fourth year.
- Yes
- I think that the people that would like to learn these things will really be excited and benefit from them.
- That would be a really good idea

Technical experience electives during the first three years of the reduced core curriculum but before the senior year rotations:

1. Spending two weeks working with the calving pen manager in the calving pen of a dairy that calves about 30 cows per day as part of the first three years of the curriculum

- Great idea
- Yes but why can't this be part of 4th year? The current calving block at the Caine Center is a waste of time because they do a good job of bull selection and calving problems are extremely rare.
- Great idea
- Very good- you could learn a huge amount of info. on manipulations etc. by working with the calving crew on a dairy. I feel that they are better at what they do than most veterinarians due to the large number of calvings that they see daily
- Sounds great!
- This would be valuable, particularly for those of us without a large animal/farm background - I feel like I 'm getting interested in my fourth year, but I do not feel comfortable at all with the production side/large farm aspect.
- Yes
- As long as it is timed right, this could be good.

2. Spending two weeks doing rectal palpation behind the herd veterinarians on a very large dairy as part of the first three years of the curriculum

- Even better idea- Most employers expect that a new grad has basic palpation skills which I believe is not being met here at WSU unless the individual student goes out and tries to find it on their own
- Great idea
- I think that this would have to be very good for those interested in large or mixed animal practice. But I don't feel it would be fair to the hosting vets to have students come that are not interested in being there (small animal people) even though I feel that you can get valuable lessons from any experience, even though it is not in your area of interest
- Yes

- Again, more exposure and repetition helps us to feel more confident that yes, this is something that I could do.
- Yes
- Great idea.

3. *Spending several rotations of one or two weeks at a spay-neuter clinic learning to do spays and neuters as part of the first three years of the curriculum*

- Great idea- I worked one week at a shelter doing spays/neuters and it was a great experience, I will do them even as a LA vet. Made me feel more confident about surgery in general
- Yes, that would be great
- This would be very helpful for people going into private practice.
- I feel that the more time you get to spend doing surgery the better- no matter if you are a large or small animal person. One of the best experiences I had during my 4th year was on one of my SIPEs where I had several spays and neuters each day on stray animals or consenting client animals. Even though I am planning on practicing large animal medicine it was very good in giving me confidence in my surgical abilities
- Yes
- This also would be very useful because even students that aren't planning on doing small animal will probably at some point be in a situation where being able to doing a spay or neuter would be useful.
- Great idea.

4. *Rotating through the clinic to learn and perfect the common technical veterinary skills (e.g., vein sticks, installing catheters, bandaging) while delivering nursing care during the first three years of the curriculum*

- Another great idea
- This would be helpful for both the 4th years and the other students since the 4th years could focus more on the medicine, and the 1st through 3rd years could focus on technical skills as well as keeping focused on the end goal of all the class work
- Yes
- Technical experience is lacking at WSU! Any opportunity to perfect technical skills would be great
- Practice makes perfect- the more you are allowed to do or practice something the better you will be at it. It would be very beneficial for any student and would prepare students for their 4th year. Plus as a former 4th year student- it would have been nice at times to have an underclassman that could occasionally relieve/help us with some of the patient care
- this is an excellent idea - i wish i had done it!
- This would help 4th years out a lot. However, this should not be the only way for students to learn practical skills. I think some of these skills should have been acquired prior to vet school by working/volunteering at clinics. The vet school should select for intelligent students with excellent veterinary experience.
- Yes
- Not so good. The potential to become free labor and not actually get the experience is too high. I think that technical experience is a great idea. I just have a problem with

making these things elective. Technical experience should be a required part of the curriculum.

5. Any others?

- Sounds like there are some great ideas in the works, I look forward to seeing the changes in the program
- These lofty goals sound great and would definitely be of benefit for future students.
- Anything that helps a person with their people/communication skills
- These sound like good goals. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few particularly good clinicians like Dr. Tibary, it seems like the goal of the teaching hospital currently has very little to do with teaching and preparing veterinary graduates.
- All of these are great ideas and would increase basic skills expected of new grads.

Thank you very much for your time!

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Comments made on their Caine block evaluations from 2 other students (for a total of 16 of 26) who did not respond to the above query:

- Caine Preventive Medicine block was the best I had for learning and hands-on techniques
- Try to get the Caine Preventive Medicine block exchangeable w/ some of the required small animal blocks at WSU