

2026 AABP Recent Graduate Conference

February 13–14, 2025

Lincoln, Nebraska



“Setting the Tone” at 2026 AABP Recent Graduate Conference

Veterinarian attendees were “Setting the Tone” at this conference for their veterinary businesses.

AABP members who are recent veterinary graduates were “Setting the Tone” at the 2026 AABP 9th Recent Graduate Conference Feb. 13-14 in Lincoln, Neb. In-person attendance was limited to AABP members who graduated veterinary school eight or fewer years ago. This conference had the second highest attendance with 248 veterinarians, 64 seminar attendees, 48 exhibitor representatives and 21 accompanying persons for a total of 326.

With a theme of “Setting the Tone” and offering 15.5 RACE-approved CE credits, in addition to general, beef and dairy, clinical skills, and mixed animal sessions, there were also four day-long, intensive preconference seminars on dystocias and fetotomies, lameness treatment protocols, personal and business finance and using on-farm data in practice. “This year’s conference had me beaming from Thursday to Saturday,” said AABP Emerging Leader and Program Chair Dr. Tracy Potter. “The speakers took our topic requests and knocked it out of the park in every session. Rooms were full for every talk, and the halls were vibrant during milk breaks, with connections new and old.”

Potter notes that a big highlight was the way that so many of the talks unintentionally complemented each other. “Repeated themes I heard were the importance of safety, the huge impact that consistent small changes can make, and remembering to look upstream to prevent problems rather than only treating them.”

The program committee, consisting of Dr. Tracy Potter (chair and AABP Emerging Leader), Dr. Monika Dziuba (dairy), Dr. Riley Jones (beef) and Dr. Tanya Weber (beef), matched the demographic of attendees. Kicking off the program was a keynote by Dr. Tera Rooney Barnhardt with, “Chupacabras in the Corrals”. She said, “Every career has its chupacabras

— the things that feel mysterious, intimidating, dark and downright scary. They show up in your corral whether you invited them or not. The question isn’t whether they’ll appear. The question is: what tone will you set when they do?”

Session topics included farm safety, low-stress people handling, fluid therapy, antibiotic selection, OB cases, LDA surgery, cattle handling, laceration repair, useful knots and knives in practice, off-feed cows, youngstock data, records analysis, heifer selection, parasites, grazing, calf audits, managing outbreaks, meat quality, USDA inspection, dairy reproduction, cow-calf medicine, lameness, cultural communications and practice tips. There was also a mixed animal session with topics on swine, horses, poultry and small ruminants.

“The primary mission of AABP is to provide relevant continuing education to cattle veterinarians,” said AABP Executive Director Dr. Fred Gingrich. “This conference provides AABP the opportunity to target this CE to recent graduates with the goals of engaging them with colleagues at a similar stage of their career, provide them the information they need to succeed early in their career, and retain them in bovine practice and AABP.”



2026 AABP Recent Graduate Conference Program Committee, L-R: Dr. Monika Dziuba (Dairy), Dr. Riley Jones (Beef), Dr. Tanya Weber (Beef), Dr. Tracy Potter (Chair and AABP Emerging Leader).

“This conference continues to deliver exceptional continuing education and meaningful networking opportunities for our newest colleagues,” said AABP President Dr. Callie Willingham. “The energy, engagement, and enthusiasm truly

The American Association of Bovine Practitioners is an international association of veterinarians serving society as leaders in cattle health, welfare and productivity.

stand out – learning extends beyond the session rooms into the exhibit hall and social events, where lasting professional relationships are formed. These recent graduates are deeply committed to bovine medicine and are already shaping the future of our profession.”

“The atmosphere was second to none,” Potter added. “I encourage all recent graduates to continue making it a priority, and for all employers to help make that possible. In the midst of one of the most challenging seasons of our careers, this conference allows us to refocus on why we chose this path and what we have to look forward to.”

#RG2026

Registrants and AABP members can access the RACE-approved recorded presentations of the Recent Graduate and Annual Conferences as a free member benefit through the Beef Cattle Institute website accessible at https://aabp.org/members/cont_ed.asp.

“Overherd” at Recent Grad

“What are you producing? You’re selling something someone is going to want to eat. And eat again.”

Dr. Phil Bass on the veterinarian’s role in meat quality and food safety.

Preconference Seminars Offered In-depth Instruction

Four well-attended preconference seminars helped attendees take home practical skills to put immediately into practice.

This year's offerings included Dystocia and Fetotomies, Thinking Through and Preventing Lameness, Personal and Business Finance for Veterinarians and Using On-farm Data for Problem-solving in Cattle Practice.

Dystocias and Fetotomies

Once again, the sold-out Bovine Dystocia and Fetotomy preconference seminar was a hands-on team effort presented by Drs. Meredyth Jones-Cook, Caitlin Wiley and Jen Roberts who instructed the group on all types of calving issues followed by hands-on teaching and skills.

Wiley spoke about dealing with dystocia with twins. She says twins are usually smaller, but



Dr. Caitlin Wiley (pink coveralls) gives a hand to attendees with the custom-made birthing stands.

sometimes want to exit at the same time and there can be several limbs to untangle. “If you have legs, follow them back to see what they are attached to,” Wiley suggested. She said one calf is usually

backward due to not enough room to turn around. “Try to find out which one has more limbs coming and then try to push the other one away.”

Later, attendees practiced on custom-made bovine birth canals and used cadaver calves to learn how to handle difficult or abnormal presentations and dystocias as well as fetotomies. They were provided disposable coveralls, boot covers, gloves and the necessary equipment.

Thinking Through and Preventing Lameness

Drs. Pierre-Yves Mulon and Gerard Cramer put on another excellent hands-on lameness seminar.



Dr. Gerard Cramer instructs an attendee on hoof trimming.

After instructive lectures, the group donned disposable coveralls and boot covers and worked on cadaver hooves on custom-made hoof stands.

Personal and Business Finance for Veterinarians

This preconference seminar offered personal finance and business management skills, and basic accounting to improve attendees' abilities to manage their personal and professional lives.



One discussion was on debt – is it good or bad? Dr. Brian Reed identified some of each kind of debt.

Potential good debt:

- Education/training – investing in yourself for future earnings
- Investing in appreciating assets (real estate, land, farm)
- Income-generating assets (business, equities, rental real estate)

Potential bad debt:

- Spending tomorrow's income on today's wants (financing things that go down in value)
 - Credit cards not paid before interest accrues
 - Speculative investments before you have a sound foundation
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"Overherd" at Recent Grad

"Everyone has someone or something to go home to. I don't want to lose anyone".

Dr. Tera Barnhardt discussing safety of working with dairy systems

Welcome Reception Kicks off the Conference



Thank you, Boehringer Ingelheim, for the fantastic welcome reception! BI's Dr. Jen Roberts welcomed attendees to the event. She said, "The habits you take on now will

affect your practice and clients and put you on the path to success. Successful veterinarians don't have all the answers – we're always learning and setting the tone by being here."

Chupacabras in the Corrals

At the Recent Graduate Conference Dr. Tera Barnhardt gave the opening keynote address, "Chupacabras in the Corrals". "Every career has its 'chupacabras' — the things that feel mysterious, intimidating, DARK, downright scary. They show up in your corral whether you invited them or not. The question isn't



whether they'll appear. The question is: what tone will you set when they do?"

She said the mythical chupacabra is what we blame when we don't yet have an answer. "It's what we say when something feels mysterious. Or frustrating. Or outside our control. And that's exactly why it matters. Because early in your career, you will have your own chupacabras. Things you can't explain yet. Things that feel bigger than you. Things that don't fit neatly into what you studied. Blaming the chupacabra is human. But growing as a veterinarian means learning to step past the myth and into curiosity."

Barnhardt said, "Unfortunately, the chupacabras don't go away. You just get better at recognizing them. Setting the tone isn't about pretending things aren't hard. It's about deciding who you will be when they are."

Cattle Handling Systems for Efficiency

"Imagine you, the recent veterinary graduate, telling a seasoned beef producer that their handling facilities are inadequate, and you know how to fix them," said Beef Session speaker, AABP President-Elect Dr. Mark Hilton. "Let that thought sit for a while. Not only will nothing change, but you may also never be allowed back on the farm or ranch."

Hilton suggested that a better technique is after hearing frustration in the voices of those working the cattle, to say something such as, "Tell me about the things you like about the working facilities." Listen carefully and agree where appropriate. Now ask, "What is frustrating about them?" He said to listen intently and agree as needed.

He said there are some "universal truths" when describing cattle handling facilities, and because they work nearly everywhere, to start there. "A producer does not need to spend an extraordinary amount of money to have a functional and efficient working facility."



A well-designed working facility requires three distinct areas: working, ready and resting. The working area is where animals in the chute and alleyway are being processed or will be within the next few minutes. The ready area contains two-to-three times as many animals as in the working area, and they are the ones that will be processed next. The third group is the one that is absent many times – the resting group.

"The resting group has cattle resting, exactly as the name suggests," he explained. "If we have no resting group, we are constantly stirring up the ready group to sort out a few cows to join the working group. That is counterproductive to low-stress cattle handling."

"Overherd" at Recent Grad

"Although dairy youngstock data can be difficult to generate, it is a valuable tool for calf decision making, farm improvements and veterinarians' on-farm credibility."

Dr. Bethany Dado-Senn

Are You Listening to the Calves?

In his presentation on dairy calf audits, Dr. Jonathan Richardson suggested to "listen" to what the calves are telling you. "We selfishly tend to believe calf audits revolve around pleasing the veterinarians with the management provided by caretakers, but the four-legged creatures are most important. What do the calves say about living on your client's farm?"

He said to assess attitudes, body condition scores, and cough or diarrhea throughout the barn. Are calves alert and active or depressed? Are they quiet or vocal? "Make a goal to perform audits anywhere between two hours after morning feeding and two hours before evening feeding. Calves exhibiting hunger before feeding or postprandial depression after feeding times often mask disease."

Richardson noted that there should be a section on your audit report for individual calves to treat. "Perform physical exams when needed. Focus on hydration status, examining navels, assessing ambulation (including palpating joints), examining the entire respiratory tract, and taking temperatures."



Encourage proper biosecurity by isolating sick calves when needed. “Write out the clinical signs you are seeing on your report and match them with the disease(s) to show calf caretakers what to look for,” he advised. “No matter how frequently you perform audits, caretakers are with

the calves at least twice daily and need to be able to pick out sick calves.”

“Overherd” at Recent Grad

“Not all parasites are undesirable. Parasites that remain susceptible to anthelmintics, referred to as refugia, dilute resistant genotypes within the overall parasite population.”

Dr. Christine Navarre

Training that Sticks: Engaging, Adapting and Communicating across Cultures

Approximately 60% of the North American livestock workforce comprises immigrant workers, predominantly Spanish-speaking males aged 31-38 years. Roughly 60% have completed some high school, often with limited English proficiency and minimal prior cattle experience. “The industry faces 47% turnover and elevated injury rates, creating persistent challenges for knowledge retention and protocol compliance,” said Dr. Mariana Guerra Maupome.



“These demographic and logistical constraints necessitate training that is bilingual, visual, hands-on and delivered where work happens – not in classrooms,” she said.

Veterinarians should adopt a four-part approach for farm training, Guerra Maupome said. They are:

- **Teach** by demonstrating correct techniques and simplifying clinical rationale into actionable rules.
 - **Coach** by providing timely feedback and training supervisors, who control daily reinforcement.
 - **Enable** by creating bilingual, one-page visual job aids (e.g., treatment flowcharts, injection-site guides) that survive turnover.
 - **Verify** by embedding compliance checks into routine herd visits, such as observing five treatment events or milking procedures.
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Common Health Issues of Poultry

Because many recent graduates are in mixed practices, the 2026 conference offered a mixed animal session. Dr. Hailey Quercia presented “Poultry 101” for those veterinarians who may see some backyard poultry.

“Many health issues can be tied to poor husbandry, particularly lapses in biosecurity,” Quercia said. “Poultry are quite susceptible to viral and bacterial pathogens, which can be spread readily from equipment, footwear and new birds.” Other common issues include neoplastic diseases, nutritional issues, parasites and fungal disease.



“Practitioners should be aware of regulatory diseases, including the current North American outbreak of avian influenza,” she said. “Highly pathogenic avian influenza is spread via wild birds, particularly waterfowl, and leads to mass morbidity and mortality. Suspected cases should be reported to the state veterinarian.”

Helping Ranchers Choose the Next Generation of Cows

Dr. Ben Bennett said one of the tools that can be used to evaluate beef heifers, especially the outliers, is pelvic measuring. That information can then be used to make conclusions as to which females may be more or less prone to dystocia issues during parturition. Bennett said, "Although pelvic area and frame size are correlated, it is interesting to observe that they do not always run hand-in-hand. I have found that producers are usually surprised to see when a seven-weight heifer comes through with a pelvic area of 220 while the nine-weight comes through with an area of 130. Again, pelvic area is correlated to frame size, but using pelvic measuring to find the outliers is helpful."



He suggests clients can arrange the animals in order from largest to smallest pelvic area and make decisions based on that. "Due to the correlation between pelvic area and frame size, I strongly recommend that clients do not just select those with the largest area," Bennett noted. "Instead, I

recommend that they use it to make culling decisions. One common scenario is that clients will use this information to cull 5-10% of the heifers with the smallest pelvic areas."

"Overheard" at Recent Grad

"Veterinarians earn credibility by improving execution, not by writing longer protocols."

Dr. Mariana Guerra Maupome speaking on training across cultures

Vaxxinova Sponsors Friday Lunch

Thank you, Vaxxinova, for being a long-time support of our Friday lunch for Recent Grad attendees! Dr. Halley Fobes welcomed attendees.



Dairy Reproduction and Protocols

The importance of reproductive efficiency in dairy herds cannot be overstated, and the veterinarian's role in designing, directing and executing reproductive management programs is central to success. Dr. Blake Nguyen spoke on dairy reproduction protocol development, the lactation curve and how it governs the power of dairy reproduction. "Milking a fresher herd is the main goal of dairy reproduction and days open beyond a certain sweet spot that many models have attempted to identify will accumulate opportunity costs in losses of milk sales, feed efficiency, calf sales, time value of money, and even performance in the subsequent lactation."



He said an overarching thesis is that holistic management is key to great performance: great calves that grow well will be more fertile heifers, heifers that reach at 82-85% of mature body weight after first calving will stay in the herd and be more fertile and more productive cows.

"Records and animal identification have become very precise in modern dairies so there are few excuses

for allowing cows to slip through the cracks. Optimizing strategies for managing labor efficiency and efficient use of capital investments can be tailored to meet the unique needs and expectations of your various clients. In my opinion, a one-size-fits-all reproductive management protocol does not exist.”

Thank You, Merck Animal Health, for Sponsoring the Saturday Lunch!



Thank you, Merck Animal Health, for once again sponsoring the Saturday lunch. Merck's Dr. Blaine Johnson greeted attendees and discussed Merck's initiatives.

“Overheard” at Recent Grad

“We didn’t become veterinarians because we wanted to mistreat, hurt or abuse animals.”

Dr. Dee Griffin

Beef Cow-calf Medicine for the Dairy Vet

Many dairy veterinarians may have some beef clients or are looking to expand in the beef arena. Dr. Kayla Clark said, “Veterinarians are in a position to help producers integrate nutrition, mineral



supplementation, vaccination protocols and performance monitoring into practical systems that support long-term business success. A systems-based, seasonal approach

allows veterinarians to better align recommendations with producer capabilities while improving reproductive efficiency, calf health and long-term herd productivity.”

One of the areas Clark discussed was forage nutrition. “Nutrition is the single largest cost in beef cow-calf production, with forage forming the foundation of most diets. Unlike dairy systems, beef producers in the Midwest rarely work with nutritionists and infrequently analyze forages, often relying on tradition or peer recommendations.” She said beef cattle are intended to graze pasture as long as possible, yet producers have access to the same feed resources as dairy operations, including stored forages, energy and protein supplements, minerals and water.

Carry All of That Great Information!



Thanks, Elanco Animal Health, for once again sponsoring the great bags at the Recent Grad Conference!

Modeled here by Dr. Meagan Noblin (left) and Recent Grad Program Committee member Dr. Riley Jones.

Understanding the Inspection Process to Influence Culling Decisions

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is responsible for ensuring animal welfare and food safety at federally inspected slaughter establishments through comprehensive ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection. Ante-mortem inspection evaluates live animals for conditions that may render them unfit for slaughter, while also verifying compliance with humane handling regulations. Post-mortem inspection is performed to identify disease, contamination or quality defects that could pose a food safety concern.

Dr. Kayla Williams said, “Ante-mortem inspection is conducted while the animal is alive and prior to slaughter,” she said. “All animals must be observed from both sides, at rest and in motion. During this inspection, FSIS inspectors evaluate animals for conditions or disease states that may render them unfit for human consumption.”



Following ante-mortem inspection, animals are classified by the inspector into one of three categories: passed, suspected or condemned.

- Passed animals are deemed acceptable for slaughter.
- Suspect animals exhibit conditions that warrant further examination during post-mortem inspection. The decision to designate an animal as suspect is at the discretion of the inspector.
- Condemned animals are determined to be unfit for slaughter and human consumption.

Ante-mortem condemnation is relatively uncommon – since many conditions require post-mortem examination for definitive diagnosis – but certain cases warrant condemnation. Animals identified for condemnation are promptly and humanely euthanized by establishment personnel and disposed of accordingly.

“Overherd” at Recent Grad

“The profession is hard. It is beautiful. It is deeply meaningful. And it will ask more of you than you think you have. The chupacabras will show up. But so will your mentors. So will your colleagues. So will the people sitting in this room. Run toward each other. Set the tone early. Set it deliberately. And when the dark shows up in the corral – who will you be?”

Dr. Tera Barnhardt in her keynote address

Hungry, Hangry or Just Off?

Off-feed cows are among the most frequent and frustrating presentations in dairy practice, said Dr. Jess McArt. “First, we must determine if decreased intake is the primary problem or a consequence of disease, and then we must deliver supportive care that aids in the restorations of rumen function and hydration.”

Being “off feed” is a sign, not a diagnosis, and is one of the most common signs of a sick cow. “To give you a sense of how common being off feed or anorexic is for a cow, there are 363 possible differential diagnoses,” McArt noted. “This highlights the importance of our physical examination skills!”

All assessments should start with a solid physical examination. As part of a physical exam for an off-feed cow, be sure to auscultate the rumen for one minute or more, palpate the left paralumbar fossa to assess rumen fill and stratification, ping both sides of the abdomen, do a rectal exam to check rumen fill and location internally and manure consistency, and assess hydration status. “These should all be part of your normal physical examination, but be extra sure to assess these areas well for off-feed cows,” McArt said.

Be sure to complete the rest of your physical exam to rule out primary diseases in which being off feed is a secondary sign, including examination of the udder, which an essential part of every physical exam for a dairy cow.

Heritage Vet Partners Sponsors Childcare Room

AABP conferences are family-friendly and offer childcare rooms at its conferences! Heritage Vet Partners sponsored the childcare room at the Recent Grad Conference.

This is a room for attendees' children and caregivers that has toys, books, games, activities and snacks for kids of all ages.

Thanks, HVP!



Parasite Control in Beef Cattle

Anthelmintic resistance among gastrointestinal nematodes of beef cattle is now widespread in the United States and represents a major threat to long-term herd health, productivity and veterinary sustainability. Dr. Christine Navarre said, “For decades, parasite management relied on highly



effective, convenient dewormers applied using standardized programs. Declining efficacy of existing compounds, combined with the absence of new drug classes in the development pipeline, necessitates a shift from routine deworming to integrated parasite control.”

Navarre talked about refugia strategies. “Not all parasites are undesirable,” she said. “Parasites that remain susceptible to anthelmintics, referred to as refugia, dilute resistant genotypes within the overall parasite population. Resistant parasites survive treatment and increase in frequency when refugia are eliminated.” She explained that whole-group deworming disproportionately removes susceptible parasites and accelerates resistance. Preservation of refugia is therefore a cornerstone of sustainable parasite control programs.

Two refugia strategies are selective non-treatment and targeted selective treatment. Selective non-treatment involves leaving a defined proportion, typically 10% to 30%, of animals in each management group untreated. Selection may be random or based on weight, with heavier animals preferentially left untreated.

“Overherd” at Recent Grad

“Highly pathogenic avian influenza is spread via wild birds, particularly waterfowl, and leads to mass morbidity and mortality. Suspected cases should be reported to the state veterinarian.”

Dr. Hailey Quercia in her “Poultry 101” talk

Developing Youngstock Data

A farm’s veterinary consultant and the producer should identify data goals such as moderating calf inventory, recognizing performance patterns, identifying excellent and poor performing animals, and exploring management changes, according to Bethany Dado-Senn. She said this team should prioritize, essentialize and systemize.



Prioritize: With their goals in mind, the client and consultant must work together to identify top priority data including mortality, morbidity (i.e., bovine respiratory disease, diarrhea, infections and injury), maternity (i.e., dam and calf colostrum parameters and calf serum total proteins), and growth (i.e., average daily gain, dry

matter intake, and feed efficiency).

Essentialize: Upon establishing top metrics, the calf team should identify what’s essential to achieving data collection and remove the barriers to success. For instance, compare with the calf team the ease of data entry on paper vs. in computer software, discuss what tools may need to be purchased to accurately and consistently measure data, and review how employees will include data collection and recording.

Systemize: Once barriers have been addressed, the consultant and client should establish a framework or system of data collection varying from basic (i.e., bare minimum data to identify population-level outcomes) to advanced (i.e., comprehensive data allowing for more strategic analysis).

“Work collaboratively with your clients to identify important performance metrics, identify and remove barriers, establish frameworks for data collection, and provide actionable reports.”

CE CERTIFICATES

Find your CE certificate at <https://aabp.org>, hover over your name in the upper righthand corner and select My CE Certificates.

Conference Trade Show Offered Valuable Information

The AABP Recent Graduate Conference once again held a successful tradeshow that offered table top exhibits from 30 companies and organizations. Breaks and social hours were held in the trade show area for maximum exposure of attendees to exhibitors. Attendees were able to spend time and learn about the exhibitors' products.

We thank all of our exhibitors!



Heritage Vet Partners Sponsor Closing Reception

Thank you, Heritage Vet Partners, for the lovely closing reception! The excitement of the attendees and speakers was still evident even after these very busy and thought-provoking days! A lot of previous connections were renewed and many new friends, colleagues and contacts were made.



Program Committee Practice Tips

It's a tradition at the conference that members of the program committee offer practice tips in the closing session.

Program Chair Dr. Tracy Potter presented, "You Only Get One Body, Make It Last". She offered four tips for supporting your body in a physically demanding job. "I was encouraged to have a back-up plan – such as small animal medicine – for 'if/when' I got injured. I didn't really like that. I think we can control the controllables and do what we can to get the best outcome." Potter's tips were:



1. Palpate with both arms.
2. Improve palpating mechanics and technique. "Perfection is not the goal," she said. "Just do things consistently. If the rectum is above your shoulder, you should be on something higher." She also suggested using a stool.
3. Strength training. Potter said veterinarians need to prepare for the unpredictable nature of the job. "Train like an athlete – you ARE one!"
4. Make your brain more valuable than your arm. "Do things like employee training, milk quality, nutrition, on-farm research, partial budgeting decisions, health and production reporting and calf herd health."

Dairy Chair Dr. Monika Dziuba presented "Udderly Useful Practice Tips for Cow Vets 2026."



1. Imposter Syndrome. "Even your favorite vet still gets imposter syndrome – or got it!" she said. "All of those you idolized, your mentors, even had it or have it. Don't let it get in your way."
2. Find a passion/niche. Dziuba suggested "High Performance Habits" by Brendon Burchard. "This is what will make you passionate and keep your interest in the profession. Mine is milk quality."

3. Find a mentor. The AABP Member Resources page has contact information for people who are experts in their field.
4. Make SMART goals for yourself: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
5. Enjoy and have fun! It's worth it in the end!

Beef Chair Dr. Riley Jones presented "Wait...I'm the Doc Now". She spoke on mentorship and who mentors could be, including:

- Other associates or employees in your clinic
- Classmates
- Family members or other veterinarians you know
- Professors

She also said give yourself time. "The more you see things, the more comfortable you will be with it," she said. "It's OK if you don't know something."

- Never be afraid to say I'm not sure.
- But you should have an answer to follow up.
- Most clients appreciate the honesty.
- You aren't expected to be an expert in everything.



Beef Chair Dr. Tanya Weber spoke on "Mentorship: Your Contribution". She said when working within a mentorship situation, you need to:

- Define your own expectations:
 - Structure
 - Communication (method, frequency)

- Identify holes in your knowledge or skillset.
- How do you plan to measure success?

Mentorship: General thoughts

- Anyone can be a potential mentor.
- You can have different mentors for different things.
- Mentorship is a two-way street.

Knots/Knives/Knerves

It was a full house when well-known beef cattle veterinarian Dr. Dee Griffin spoke to attendees. Griffin's passion for safety was evident in his presentation. "Safety is critical for everyone around us, even the animals," he said. "Just think about what can go wrong. What's the hazard, what can go wrong and how can I keep it from happening?"

Griffin said, "The size of cattle and situations with which we work is inherently dangerous." He added that important safe cattle handling includes the use of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). The emphasis can be summarized with the acronym SAFE (safety of yourself, safety of the animal, safety of the food and safety of everyone around the animal).

"As the veterinarian responsible for the workers and the animals, it is important we take no chances," Griffin stressed. "Know the equipment we use and work around. Additionally, watch for maintenance issues. Gates that don't function properly can be serious hazards when handling the size animals for which we care and work around. Learn the basic control of not only chutes but also of skid steers, loaders and trucks in case in a pinch the equipment needs to be moved as part of someone's safety."



Griffin first discussed working around fractious cattle and using tools such as a pole syringe when needed. He then discussed useful rope knots for working with cattle, and provided all attendees with a length of thin rope so they could practice the most useful knots he uses in different situations. Griffin also had a critical tip: "Always have a way to cut a rope for you, someone else or the animal to escape!"

He then talked about knives, axes and other implements useful in cattle work, include postmortems, and how to sharpen them. "Keep safety at the top of your knife handling list!" he said. "A sharp knife is safer than a dull knife."

For the "knerves" portion of his talk, he gave information about dehorning and using anesthetic in cattle. It stops most, if not all, of the animal's resistance or fight. "Anesthetic decreases most, if not all the bawling, which is an indication of pain," he

explained. “It makes the job a bit easier and frequently safer. There is a potential to improve performance and selfishly we sell performance and gain efficiency.”

He said if an animal we depend on to make a living is mistreated in any fashion – physically, nutritionally, environmentally, emotionally, any fashion – it comes out of our bank account. “Plus, it is a nice thing to do,” he said. “We didn’t become veterinarians because we wanted to mistreat, hurt or abuse animals. And it’s just better stewardship of a precious resource for which we have accepted responsibility.”

Laceration Repair and Wound Management in the Field

Often veterinarians deal with addressing lacerations and wounds in the field. Dr. Matt Miesner explained that the three phases (or stages) of wound healing are shared between mammals. “Species tend to have some variation in expression within each stage, but the order, normal duration, and causes for variability are essentially same,” he said. “It should also be noted that each phase is not mutually exclusive; there is gradual transition, and some overlap exists.”

He said the order of the phases, timing of the wound, and gross observation should all be taken into account during management, whether accidental or intentionally (surgical) induced.

The three phases are inflammation (some term “traumatic”), proliferation and maturation. During the first six to seven days after a wound occurs, the inflammatory/destructive phase dominates. “During this time the tissue is acutely injured, exposed to the environment, leaks blood, interstitial and lymphatic fluids,” explained Miesner. “A specific series of cellular and chemical processes are occurring, and the basic acute wound management principles of care should be instituted.” These interventions are hemostasis, compression and anti-inflammatories.



Miesner said to note that there is a natural destructive component occurring here with macrophages being recruited. “It is important to limit exogenous products that would amplify tissue destruction including the natural cells sent to help clean the wound.”

CLOSING KEYNOTE Find Your Team

The closing keynote did not disappoint with Dr. Jess McArt. McArt started off by stating that you never know where your career will take you. “I started as a practicing dairy veterinarian but now spend 50% of my time in administration. People who are trained in systems thinking are good at this. I am also Editor-in-Chief for *JDS Communications*, but I still get to work with cows!”

She shared lessons on the importance of teamwork in both life and bovine practice. “What I learned from group projects was how to find a team you like.” In her younger years, McArt was a professional cross-country skier, and she said she learned dedication and responsibility, dealing with ups and downs, and how to be a good loser. “I also learned to experience joy for others on a team.”

She said for veterinarians, you need to learn to build a lifelong team. “Friend networks are powerful. We all have shared trauma and we began to develop communication skills.” One of her favorite quotes is from longtime AABP member Dr. Mike Apley in 2018. He said: “A friend is someone who respects you more than you deserve and expects from you more than you think you can give.”

Finding your team. McArt explained when she did a PhD, it was challenging, humbling and she had difficulty finding her team. “Find your team!” she said. What makes a team successful? McArt said successful teams have strong relationships. She suggests reading *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott. “One of the ways we communicate is we have radical candor – we care about people but have difficulty having conversations with them.” She said honest



communication involves having the difficult as well as the positive conversations.

“You never know what other people are going through,” she said, “and other people don’t know what you are going through unless you communicate. And neither may be anybody’s business.”

She suggests that in a practice situation, that you don’t engage in gossip and you talk to people in person. “Dialogue is to take part in a conversation to resolve a problem,” she said.

McArt said to have a fulfilling veterinary career:

- Find your team.
- Start making relationships with your clients and colleagues.
- Be willing to engage in honest and caring communication.
- Give people grace.
- Be good to yourself – set boundaries and find joy outside of work!



2026 AABP Annual Conference
August 27-29, Minneapolis, Minn.

2027 AABP Recent Graduate Conference
February 12-13, Baton Rouge, La.

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT GRADUATE CONFERENCE SPONSORS!



*AABP post-conference newsletter created by Geni Wren,
AABP Director of Marketing and Communications*