

## LIVESTOCK/DAIRY—Plans move ahead for Idaho's livestock research center

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PLANNING CONTINUES for advanced livestock and environmental research facilities in the Magic Valley by the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, its partners in the dairy and beef industries, and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

During a December progress report to the Idaho State Board of Education, which serves as the university's Board of Regents, officials reported two significant changes in the planning effort: the investigation of a lease-purchase alternative to the search for a site for the Idaho National Center for Livestock and Environmental Studies and the start of preliminary design work on a related laboratory.

The center is evolving to match the state and nation's economic conditions, said John Hammel, the college's dean. "We have preliminary plans and budget for building a new livestock research center, but we are expanding our planning to include the alternative of retrofitting an existing dairy that could be leased with an option to purchase."

**FOCUS:** The research center would include the center for livestock and environmental studies; a 1,500-dairy-cow and beef cattle livestock facility; and a joint veterinary, research, teaching and diagnostic laboratory operated by the University of Idaho and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

"We need to look to the future as a state with an important livestock industry," Hammel said. "We serve the state, and the state has the need for advanced research facilities to keep the industry and the environment healthy. That is why we're looking at everything strategically. At the same time, we know we're not going to go forward with the livestock research center until the funding package is complete."

**COSTS/FUNDING:** Preliminary estimates price the facilities at \$25 to \$35 million. Through the Independent Dairy Environmental Action League Foundation, the dairy industry has committed \$5 million. The Idaho Legislature appropriated \$10 million for the project in 2007.

Funding for the remainder of the project will be through the university's agriculture college endowment. In 2007, the university successfully sought federal legislation to allow use of the endowment for acquisition of research facilities for university use.

## \$450,000 grant funds UI research on calves best at weight gain with fewest calories

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SOME BEEF CATTLE—like some people—are exceptionally efficient at putting on weight: relatively few calories will really pile on the pounds. That's a desirable, cost-saving characteristic in cattle—especially if it can be passed on to their feedlot-bound offspring.

CALS animal scientists Rod Hill and Jason Ahola have \$450,000 from National Science Foundation Idaho EPSCoR funds—plus a \$161,000 equipment grant—to study a trait called "maintenance energy expected progeny difference" and its impact on meat quality.

Calves sired at CALS' Nancy M.

Cummings Research, Extension, and Education Center from semen of bulls either high or low in the trait will be initially assessed in Moscow, where each animal will have an individually monitored feeder. In the second and third years, computerized scales under high-tech feed bunks at Cummings will attribute intake to each steer and heifer using its electronic identification eartag.

"We want steers that gain quickly and eat less without sacrificing end-product quality and palatability," says Ahola, who is partnering with the Red Angus Association of America.

## Big opportunities at Cummings Center

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ASK SUPERINTENDENT JOHN HALL what he foresees at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension, and Education Center near Salmon, and he expresses high hopes the 1,100-acre facility will grow as a premier center for sustainable livestock studies in the Intermountain West.

"I'm very excited about the possibilities of providing ranchers with research-based information they can apply on their ranches to make things more profitable for them," says Hall, formerly an extension beef cattle specialist at Virginia Tech.

Beyond its ongoing work in genetic selection for feed efficiency and carcass quality, season-extending forages, low-stress weaning, estrus synchronization, and sexed semen for producing either male or female calves, Hall anticipates projects in intensive irrigation management, reproductive physiology, and wildlife-livestock interactions. Facilities improvements include state-of-the-art handling and feeding equipment to be installed by spring.

The center also offers learning opportunities for youth and non-ranching residents.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### #1

DAIRY WAS IDAHO'S LEADING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN 2008 FOR THE 5TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR, WITH CASH RECEIPTS FROM MILK ESTIMATED TO BE \$2.15 BILLION, 5% HIGHER THAN IN 2007

Source: The UI's *Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2008 projections*