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National DHIA selects 4 veterinary students as scholarship recipients

FITCHBURG, Wis. (February 16, 2023) – The National Dairy Herd Information Association (DHIA) Scholarship Committee selected Eleni M. Casseri, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, Travis Lenssen, Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Jared Sanderson, Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Erin Will, Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine, as recipients of \$1,500 National DHIA Veterinary Student Scholarships. Selection committee members evaluated applicants on overall interest as a veterinarian planning to work in dairy, involvement in dairy medicine and extra-curricular activities, and interest in using dairy software and dairy records to aid in dairy management and in improving animal health. To be eligible for a National DHIA Veterinary Student Scholarship, applicants must be third- or fourth-year veterinary medicine students and enrolled at a college that is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education.

Raised in a suburb of Buffalo, N.Y., Casseri touched her first cow when she was a senior in high school. A visit to a large dairy farm changed her veterinarian career interest from small animals to bovines. Casseri studied animal and veterinary sciences at the University of Vermont and earned a master's degree in public health in epidemiology from the University at Buffalo. In addition to her veterinary medicine classes at Cornell University, Casseri conducts epidemiology research that focuses on learning about dairy farmers' attitudes toward antibiotic resistance as a threat to their animals and comparing those attitudes to their daily antibiotic use habits. Last summer, Casseri did an externship with Riverview, LLP, at one of its Midwest dairies. As part of that experience, she conducted a clinical trial on an immune modulator injection in fresh cows and evaluated heat stress in animals in various locations across the barn.

With strong support from his grandpa and uncle, Lenssen spent his formidably years working on their dairy farm and participating in FFA and 4-H agricultural activities. As an FFA member, he placed second in Washington's state farm business management contest. A fellow church member and local veterinarian, Jacob Steiger, realized Lenssen's potential and encouraged Lenssen to ride with him. That experience sparked Lenssen's interest in veterinary medicine. Lenssen majored in animal science at Washington State University (WSU) and then enrolled in WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. As an undergraduate, Lenssen served as president and activities coordinator for the WSU Dairy Club and participated in Spanish Club activities. After

earning his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, he plans to work as a dairy veterinarian in “dairy country,” such as New Mexico, eastern Texas and southern Idaho.

Sanderson gained valuable dairy cattle experience on his grandfather’s farm and through 4-H. Additionally, veterinarians at a local veterinary clinic mentored him. These experiences led Sanderson to pursue a bachelor’s degree in animal science and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at Michigan State University (MSU). At MSU, he participated in Dairy Club and Block and Bridle, and served as Dairy Club president. Furthermore, Sanderson was part of Tower Guard, which provides assistance to students with disabilities while proctoring tests, converting textbooks into audio files and volunteering at Special Olympics sporting events. He also participated in Dairy Challenge; his team won the national championship. At MSU, Sanderson worked in a dairy nutrition laboratory and interned with Purina Animal Nutrition. He has a deep interest in nutrition, particularly transition cow management and byproduct utilization.

Raised on a small dairy farm in southern Indiana, Will’s youth and high school activities focused on agriculture. Throughout high school, she co-managed the breeding practices on the family’s farm and was recognized by FFA with a Gold ranking in the National Dairy Proficiency award. Will earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Purdue University. Active in the Purdue Dairy Club, she served as president and participated in Dairy Challenge and dairy judging. Her dairy judging team placed first at the Fort Worth Stock Show. Also, she was an Indiana Dairy Ambassador, which helped her build advocacy skills and relations with Indiana dairy farmers. During veterinary school, Will served as Food Animal Club dairy chair. She participated in Indiana’s bovine ambulatory and state fair production medicine blocks, and completed a dairy veterinary medicine/research internship at Iowa State University.

Money generated from the annual National DHIA Scholarship Auction primarily funds the organization’s scholarship program. Investments and donations also help build the fund. Support the National DHIA Scholarship Program by donating \$15 or more and receive a copy of *The Big Book of Moo* by Leigh Rubin. *The Big Book of Moo* features nearly 300 cow-centric cartoons. To order, e-mail BookOfMoo@dhia.org. To donate to the National DHIA Scholarship Fund, contact Leslie Thoman at 608-848-6455 ext. 108 or lthoman@dhia.org.

National DHIA, a trade association for the dairy records industry, serves the best interests of its members and the dairy industry by maintaining the integrity of dairy records and advancing dairy information systems.

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