

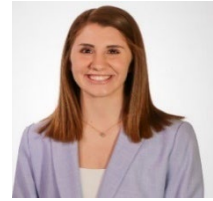
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MEGAN RATKA AWARDED 2025 NAAB DOAK GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP

Madison, WI [March 3, 2025] - The National Association of Animal Breeders is pleased to announce Megan Ratka has been selected to receive the 2025 NAAB Doak Graduate Fellowship Award.



Megan is the seventh recipient of the NAAB Doak Graduate Fellowship and impressed the selection committee with her enthusiasm for male bovine reproductive physiology. Megan will complete her Bachelor of Science in Animal Science with an emphasis in Dairy Production and a minor in Cell Biology from the University of Minnesota in May 2025. She will pursue her graduate degree focused on analyzing and sorting sperm for fertility based on their phenotype using biomarker-based semen analysis and sorting with a focus on ions, proteins, and lectins that reflect fertility potential. Image based flow cytometry and computer assisted sperm analysis could be applied within this project to sort sperm based on the identified biomarker defined status. Megan will continue her MS program at Iowa State University under the guidance of Dr. Karl Kerns.

Megan has a dairy farm background and grew up on the family hobby farm in Cold Spring, Minnesota. She was very involved in 4-H, FFA and the Minnesota Junior Holstein Association where she developed leadership and judging skills. At the U of M, Megan was a member of the first place Intercollegiate Dairy Judging team at World Dairy Expo in 2024 and placed in the top 6 individuals in all 4 judging competitions during her collegiate career. Megan received various industry scholarships for her undergraduate studies. Megan gained some international experience as she participated in a Study Abroad Program and attended classes in Greece in May of 2024.

While studying, Megan worked as a research assistant on a project studying the stress and immune response of pair versus individually housed dairy heifers throughout the weaning process. Assisting the lab assays of PCR, DNA extraction and cDNA quantification helped develop the lab skills that will be necessary for future research. She was also a teaching assistant for the Dean's Engaged Leaders Seminar, a year-long Freshman seminar course within the college of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences focusing on leadership and intercultural competence. "Being selected for the 2025 NAAB Doak Graduate Fellowship is an incredible honor! I am looking forward to working with Dr. Karl Kerns at Iowa State University within my graduate program doing research on sperm fertility. Graduate school has been a dream of mine to help further my professional development and academic journey and this fellowship has helped to make this possible" states Ratka.

The NAAB Doak Graduate Fellowship is a unique opportunity for individuals planning to pursue a career in the bovine genetic improvement industry to earn a Master of Science degree in bovine genetics or bovine male reproduction physiology. The fellowship was established to develop talent with the technical and management competencies as needed by the future cattle industry. As such, the award is intended for individuals who have long term aspirations in the genetic improvement industry. "Megan's internship at PEAK genetics in 2024 enabled her to assist with semen processing and to learn all of the steps involved from collecting the semen to processing and freezing the straws. She was responsible for the development and execution of two research projects within the quality control and Research & Development Labs focusing on sperm per straw measurement accuracy. We believe this experience will contribute to sound and useful research" states Jay Weiker, President, and CEO of NAAB. "Megan's enthusiasm and passion for the cattle industry make her an excellent recipient of this award. Her desire to pursue her studies focused on bull fertility and andrology to improve male fertility should produce positive research for the benefit of the entire industry."

NAAB is the national trade association for artificial insemination businesses. NAAB members account for about 95% of dairy and beef semen sold in the USA and market semen to more than 100 countries around the world.

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