

Graduate student career opportunities in the animal science industry. J. F. Stika¹
¹Certified Angus Beef LLC, Wooster, OH.

Globalization, consolidation, technological advancement and a more vocal consumer have each contributed to dramatic changes within animal agriculture during the past decade. Concurrent with these changes has been an increase in the breadth of employment opportunities available to graduate students. Agriculture in the 21st Century is becoming more precision based, technology driven and more focused on providing solutions to customer issues. Demand for technical service, research and development positions has increased. Both masters and doctoral graduates are being sought for these positions as companies emphasize hiring more science-oriented, technical savvy specialists to replace or compliment bachelor level sales-oriented positions. As the complexity of our industry has increased, so has the expectation companies place on new graduates entering the workforce. While discipline specific technical expertise is the basis for many new positions in animal agriculture, the business environment requires that graduate students move beyond a specific discipline and into the realm of systems thinking and multi-disciplinary problem solving. Two types of graduate training programs are still needed. One focusing the student toward a career in basic research while another focuses on applied science. However, becoming an exceptional candidate for employment takes extra effort. Those most valued in the industry must be able to successfully merge biological, financial, public policy and marketing awareness with an appreciation for the value of time and efficiency. Necessary skills beyond technical expertise include time management, effective communication, relationship building, goal setting and prioritizing, organization, and independent thinking. The opportunities for graduates of animal, dairy, and poultry science programs will continue to diversify as the issues facing animal agriculture become more challenging and the solutions more technical with broader implications across the entire industry.

Key Words: Graduate Education, Careers, Animal Science