

# OSU student club raises donated steers

By GAIL OBERST  
For the Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — At the beginning of the school year, Matthew Kennedy and Bailey Wearin contacted ranchers willing to donate steers and heifers for Oregon State University's Steer-A-Year Club.

Students who join the club will raise from 25 to 30 donated cattle during the year, gaining experience that covers all aspects of beef management, from feeding and health to harvesting, processing and marketing the meat.

"It's a totally student-run project," said Kennedy, an instructor in the university's Animal and Rangeland Science Department. Wearin, a senior majoring in agricultural business management, is project manager of the club this year.

More than 50 students attended one of the weekly meetings featuring a guest



In OSU's barns, students in the Steer-A-Year Club get technical and practical experience working with cattle.

speaker from Agri Beef Co., based in Idaho.

Students can get credit for their work raising cat-

tle for the club, but others simply volunteer, taking shifts in the barn or attending meetings to hear the

speakers and recruiters.

Featured speaker recently was Agri Beef's El Oro Yard feed manager, an OSU alum and former Steer-A-Year manager, Aly Pemberton.

"It's a great program. I love it. It got me to where I am today," Pemberton told the Steer-A-Year students at the club gathering.

OSU's program was established in 1993 to provide more real-life education for



Left to right, this year's Steer-a-Year leaders are Bailey Wearin, Matthew Kennedy and Jolie Dickerson. Kennedy is the program's instructor.

students interested in working with cattle. The club is open to all students — they don't have to be animal science majors.

"Hands-on experience is a big thing in our department," said Kennedy, who has led the program for nine years.

Oregon State's is not the only collegiate Steer-A-Year program. It has various renditions in other Western states, including Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Canada.

But each club is unique. Oregon's offers a full range of activities, from ranch to table. Most of the program's participants are women — 80 percent, estimated Kennedy — who were raised on ranches and farms, such as Wearin, who is from Joseph, and her fellow officer, Jolie Dickerson, who grew up raising horses and cattle in Pendleton.

"I'm a ranch kid," shrugs Dickerson. She's a sophomore who is exploring veterinary or dairy work.

Dirty hands, muddy feet, hard work, dedication and passion are all part of the job, said Wearin.

The students set up feeding, vaccination, judging and processing schedules, which

they review each Tuesday in club meetings. Feeding is twice a day, at 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Also, students and staff walk through the barns for a daily health check.

Students track management techniques, monthly weight and final carcass data, then they share that information with the animal's donor after the animal is sold and harvested in the spring. The cattle are raised to 1,200 to 1,400 pounds and are fed a grain-based diet to produce choice quality beef.

"A lot of donors like to see how the animal is finishing out," Kennedy said.

Students work in the OSU Clark Meat Center, learning to grade, cut and package beef. Then they meet with customers to sell the products, Kennedy said. The center is a USDA-inspected slaughter and processing facility. The meat center's retail store is open to the public each Friday.

In addition to hands-on work with animals and meetings with visiting professionals, club members also take industry tours and attend conferences.

To donate or get more information about the program, contact Kennedy at matthew.kennedy@oregonstate.edu.

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