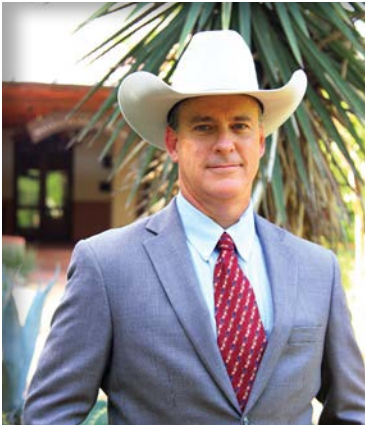


Winter 2020
Volume 15: Issue 3



KING RANCH[®]
INSTITUTE
FOR RANCH MANAGEMENT
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE





From the Director

Dr. Clay P. Mathis
Director & Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. &
Helen C. Kleberg Endowed Chair


The Next Step in Our Mission: Applied Ranching Systems Research

Since 2003, KRIRM has maintained a set of priorities in accordance with our mission that focuses on graduate student training and outreach to the ranching industry. As a result, 41 KRIRM alumni manage ranches across the United States and more than 100 lectureships and symposia have been held as an outreach service to the industry. We are very proud of the Institute's accomplishments, but we also continue to seek opportunities to broaden our impact and service to this industry of which we are so passionate.

As we look to the future, we see an opportunity for KRIRM to be even more impactful by expanding our expertise and workforce capacity in the area of profitable grazing and production systems management. This involves developing an applied research branch of KRIRM that strengthens current and future KRIRM education and outreach efforts. Our industry will benefit from research focused on issues threatening the sustainability of ranching operations, as well as research conducted for the purpose of developing innovative strategies and practical solutions for challenges facing ranch owners and managers.

We are fortunate to have extensive relationships with owners and managers of many successful ranching operations in North America, which provides us with a unique platform for ranching systems innovation. These vital relationships will help KRIRM build and shape a successful applied and translational research program.

We are excited to announce that we will work with the East Foundation in our new research endeavor. The East Foundation was established to serve the same ranching industry as KRIRM, and both KRIRM and the East Foundation share similar principles. It is only logical that KRIRM and the East Foundation find synergy in the areas of range and livestock production systems research and outreach. We are equally excited to announce that Dr. Jason Sawyer joined KRIRM this January to lead our research efforts. Dr. Sawyer is a well-established research scientist with extensive production system and rangeland management experience, and a passion for innovation. He is a perfect fit for KRIRM. Read more about Dr. Sawyer's background in research and education on page 8.

With the vast south Texas ranchlands owned and operated by the East Foundation, and the scientific expertise in livestock productions systems at KRIRM, an opportunity exists for both institutions to better impact the ranching industry, and we believe this new research venture will serve that purpose. 

Published By

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Photo by JoAnne Meeker

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On the Cover

Calf pictured in snow taken in New Mexico



Our Vision: We are determined to educate leaders who will make a positive difference in ranching and ensure that our hard-earned heritage is not lost.

Our Mission: The King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management teaches graduate students using a multi-disciplinary, systems approach to ranch management, and provides the highest quality lectureships and symposia to stakeholders in the ranching industry. We serve the ranching industry by empowering graduate students and outreach attendees with skills that will enable them to strategically manage complex ranching operations and successfully lead our industry.

2020 Vision



Duo prepares for KRIRM graduation and serving ranching industry

By: Kindra Gordon

With its unique repeating digits—and match-up to the 20/20 moniker for perfect vision—2020 is being considered a milestone year. For King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) students Zane Herrin and Tyler Gardner, it most certainly will be as they anticipate their May graduation from the program.

Gardner, who was born and raised in Wyoming, and Herrin, a Texas native, have both dedicated the last two years to expanding their ranch knowledge, skills and connections through the KRIRM. Looking forward, the duo are eager to apply their skills within the cattle industry.

Their time in Kingsville has been filled with highlights and opportunities. Here, they each share what they've gained from their coursework and internship experiences.

Financial Acumen

Both Herrin and Gardner say their favorite KRIRM courses have related to finances. Herrin counts managerial finance and managerial accounting among his most valuable experiences, and says, "Through both, I realized how much I enjoy financial analysis and making the numbers 'say something.'"

Gardner credits the course in managerial finance for growing his skills. He tells, "Dr. Kim was an excellent teacher that truly wanted each student to grasp the concepts he was covering... This class is where my understanding of how to

conduct a financial analysis really developed."

Additionally, both men point to the opportunity to work with economist Stan Bevers as a highlight of their KRIRM experience. Bevers, who works as a practitioner in ranch economics alongside KRIRM faculty at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, teaches an in-depth ranch accounting and analysis workshop and works with students on follow-up accounting exercises and service-learning projects with partnering ranches.

One project paired Herrin and Gardner working on an analysis for the Merrill Ranch in southwest Kansas, which Doug Wilmeth, a KRIRM alumnus oversees. The analysis required projecting the financial outcomes of six different operating scenarios, based on historical cost and production metrics.

Gardner and Herrin also collaborated with three KRIRM students on a project for the King Ranch to assess financial analysis of a wildlife project looking at the difference in revenue on a combination of pastures with guided hunts vs. leasing the hunting rights of those pastures.

Furthermore, in the fall of 2019, Gardner and two first-year KRIRM students completed a project evaluating the cost of a rainfall data collection method comparing alternatives that would reduce cost without sacrificing accuracy. Meanwhile, Herrin and two first-year KRIRM students conducted a project performing a financial analysis of drought-induced



Gardner pictured during his internship at Rollins Ranches in Florida.



Herrin (left) networking during a KRIRM event, which is one of the best resources afforded to the students during their time in the program.



Gardner (far right) networking with KRIRM alumni at a recent KRIRM event.

management decisions for a ranch in south Texas over a three-year period.

Hands-On Opportunities

Expanded opportunities to engage with working ranches on real-world challenges have also been part of the KRIRM training for Herrin and Gardner.

Gardner put his financial skills to work while interning with Rollins Ranches in Okeechobee, Fla., working with Darrell White, a KRIRM alumnus. His responsibilities included completing three separate financial based projects relating to optimal stocking rate, bull development, and heifer development.

Currently, his final project is working with McCarty Ranching, LLC based in Cody, Wyo., evaluating the benefits and drawbacks that the introduction of crossbreeding may have in their purebred Black Angus cowherd.

Herrin completed an internship working with Ranchester, Wyoming-based Padlock Ranch, which operates in northern Wyoming and southern Montana. Working with president and CEO Trey Patterson and livestock manager JD Hill, Herrin was responsible for a human resources development project for the ranch. Elements of the project included developing a supervisor's handbook, and creating, conducting, and analyzing an employee satisfaction survey.

Herrin's final project includes working with Sooner Cattle

Company of the AgReserves system evaluating their current cow replacement strategy.

Insights Gained

Herrin says, "I have learned that in decision making or problem solving I won't always have all the information I want or need, but my experience at KRIRM has given me the ability to critically think through complex issues. Our ranch projects gave us the platform to apply those skills so we can be more comfortable in the future."

Gardner adds, "I have heard from several different ranch managers that you cannot successfully run a ranch strictly from a desk or strictly from the saddle; you have to have a combination of the two. Coming to the Institute has provided me with the tools to be able to do both."

Additionally, Herrin says, "I have a better understanding of the concept of systems thinking and looking at issues or situations holistically, realizing that an action or decision may have indirect, delayed or even exponential effects that may not be easily recognized. Therefore, a decision can be considered from a broader perspective, accounting for all the variables involved."

Gardner and Herrin have valued the networking opportunities afforded them while at KRIRM and recognize it as one of the best tools they'll take with them in the future. They cite participating in Cattlemen's College at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Convention (NCBA) and the Excellence in Ag Leadership Program coordinated through KRIRM and the NCBA as opportunities for growth as leaders and engagement with industry.

Meeting various ranchers, professors and industry leaders has paid dividends in expanding their networks. Gardner explains, "To be able to sit down with industry leaders and ask questions and gain insights on lessons they have learned and experiences they have had has been very beneficial."

He adds, "Without question everyone will be faced with challenges or problems that they do not know the answer to



Herrin (left) working cattle during his internship at Padlock Ranch in Wyoming.

Continued on page 10



16th Annual HOLT CAT[®]

Symposium Highlights

Beef Industry Experts Discuss Beef Marketing at Recent Symposium in Kingsville

A detailed look into the changing consumer, worldwide beef consumption, technology, and more was discussed at the 16th Annual Holt Cat[®] Symposium on Excellence in Ranch Management in Kingsville, Texas, Oct. 17-18, 2019. Professionals spanning the beef industry offered their knowledge to more than 200 ranchers and landowners from 16 states at the symposium, *The Future of Beef Marketing: Technology and the Changing Consumer*.

The keynote address was delivered by Michael Uetz, Managing Principle of Midan Marketing. He broke down the different generations that make up today's consumers and influencers. Where once the beef industry distributed the product and assumed consumers (baby boomer generation) would purchase it, now beef producers must meet the demands of a generation with higher expectations. Uetz provided an explanation of the powerful impact that plant-based and new competitors have in their story telling and urged those in attendance to share their passions for environmental stewardship and pursuit of a safe, healthy, wholesome food supply.

Leann Saunders of Where Food Comes From, Inc. took the reins explaining blockchain technology and how this could help consumers feel more connected with the food they purchase. Consumers expect traceability and are demonstrating their willingness to pay for food that is traceable back to the point of production.

Russell Cross, PhD, professor at Texas A&M University, broke down the details and influence of "fake meats" as a new competitor in the meat case. As the task of feeding the growing population of the world by 2050 continues to be a driving force behind the industry, Cross explains that it will be achieved through animals, plants, and technology. Defending the word "meat" will be critical for the success of

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the beef industry, said Cross, making certain that nothing but the facts are presented to consumers.

Kent Bacus of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association turned the focus to global trade policy and foreign consumers. Bacus explained that trade agreements are important because foreign customers want beef, and our competitors are fighting for market share. The benefits of such agreements are apparent through the success story of KORUS, the Korea-US Trade Agreement. Prior to KORUS, US beef in Korea faced high tariffs and was second behind Australian beef. After the trade agreement, tariffs will be phased to zero over 15 years and U.S. beef has now surpassed Australian beef.

CattleFax CEO, Randy Blach, discussed the impact of the global market on US beef. Currently, export markets contribute over \$300 toward the value of every fed steer and heifer. He added this sobering fact – four percent of the world's population lives in the US, so export customers are the future of our business. He reminded attendees that beef cannot compete in the commodity game, but rather should focus on its quality attributes: taste, tenderness and nutrition.

The day concluded with a social and prime rib dinner where 11 individuals were recognized for earning their Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management. Dr. Mark Hussey, President of Texas A&M-Kingsville, spoke to the symposium dinner crowd about the future of agriculture in higher education.

The final day of symposium began with Blach reviewing the last 25 years of the beef business, gleaned lessons learned and what implications they might have for the future. He indicated that a major shift has occurred that is reshaping the market – the move from a supply-driven to a demand-driven market. He highlighted a win-win challenge: economically aligning producers with consumer desires and demands. If we

continue to produce a high quality protein and effectively tell its story, a world hungry for our product anxiously awaits.

A trio of presenters from the retail, packer, and feedlot sectors wrapped up symposium as they explained the profit drivers, challenges, and opportunities of their respective sectors. Molly McAdams, PhD, of OM3 explained the business drivers and challenges in the retail sector, noting that marketing is generally one of the greatest drivers used by retailers. McAdams noted how the story of the beef supply chain becomes blurry between the producer and retailer and that even though there are many different ways to tell a story, we must tell a better one.

Glen Dolezal, PhD, AVP, Technical Director and Beef Procurement for Cargill Protein discussed profit drivers and challenges for the harvest and packing segment of the industry. Sharing a common concern, he said, "Labor availability keeps packers awake at night." Production efficiency (output per unit input) is the profit-driver in the packing industry. Economy of scale is a major factor and has contributed to packer profits in the modern beef industry.

Dolezal commented on the improvement in quality grades, the wide Choice-Select spread and the possibility that Select might be the new standard.

Justin Gleghorn, PhD, Director of Value Management for Cactus Feeders, discussed the culture and business overview of Cactus Feeders and the feedlot's challenges and opportunities for success. The challenges he highlighted include cattle supply volatility, grain basis and ongoing cattle health challenges. Paralleling other speakers, he pointed to strong consumer demand and the ability to add and market value to cattle as real opportunities for the US beef industry.

Attendees also enjoyed fellowship at the industry trade show that was open during the symposium. A take-home message and wrap up was given by King Ranch General Manager of Ranching and Wildlife Operations, Dave DeLaney. After the lunch sponsored by First State Bank of Uvalde was served, attendees enjoyed a tour of King Ranch to conclude the program. 🏠

For information about KRIRM's 2020 events, visit <http://krirm.tamuk.edu/lectureships-and-symposia>.

Scenes from Symposium

October 17-18, 2019 || Kingsville, TX



Attendee at beef marketing symposium reviews materials in the industry trade show.



Recipients of the 2019 Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management pictured with KRIRM's Dr. Clay Mathis and Dr. Rick Machen.



The beef marketing symposium drew more than 200 ranchers and industry professionals.



Michael Uetz delivering the keynote address on the changing face of consumers.

From Research to Action

Sawyer Joins KRIRM to Lead New Applied Research Division

By: Ashley Patterson

As a discovered passion for research and a devoted respect for teaching led Dr. Jason Sawyer to become a research scientist with an inherent desire to provide practical solutions for the beef industry. With nearly 25 years of experience working in beef cattle production systems research, Sawyer will begin a new journey, joining the King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) as associate professor and research scientist at the helm of the KRIRM applied research branch.

In an effort to continue its outreach mission, KRIRM created the new research division to allow further expansion of expertise and impact in the area of profitable grazing and production systems management. The position of the research scientist was created by virtue of a partnership between KRIRM and the East Foundation based out of San Antonio, Texas. This endeavor will focus on research to improve ranching systems and will tackle challenges with innovative solutions. Leading this charge is Sawyer, a research scientist who discovered a new passion in the research field during his graduate school education beginning in 1996.

Education Shapes Career Path

After earning a BS in Rangeland Ecology and Management with a Ranch Management emphasis from Texas A&M University, Sawyer set a goal to become a ranch manager on an operation of at least 1,000 cows. He was advised to attend graduate school, was led to New Mexico State University (NMSU), and ultimately earned a MS and PhD, both in Beef Cattle Nutrition from NMSU. It was during this time that



Dr. Jason Sawyer at the McGregor Research Center.

Sawyer's mindset shifted toward the research and professor path.

“To be completely honest, the one job I never aspired to was ‘professor’. But as I went through the graduate program, I became very motivated about research as a method of structured problem solving,” said Sawyer.

Throughout the course of his career, Sawyer's overarching research interests involved the improvement of the efficiency of beef production systems by developing innovative solutions to production barriers. For individual operations, such research endeavors help to ensure the long-term viability of the business. Further, if a ranch is more efficient, beef production is more sustainable, which benefits the consuming public with a high-quality, safe food supply at a competitive price, explains Sawyer.

When an opportunity arose in the late 1990's to join the faculty of the NMSU Clayton Livestock Research Center, Sawyer said he was fortunate to take the position and be involved in both research and outreach duties. Sawyer became interested in how management across sectors integrates to drive outcomes in his work with cow-calf and stocker operations. While on the ground in his research at NMSU, Sawyer said he learned much in the way of shaping research questions based on its applications at the operational level.

In 2003, Sawyer joined the faculty of the Texas A&M University Department of Animal Science. He believed the chance to teach in a formal setting would be helpful and hoped to establish a more applied research program at Texas A&M. After he started teaching production management of cow-calf, stocker, and feedlot operations, Sawyer recalled an



Enterprises at the McGregor Research Center in McGregor, Texas, where Sawyer worked since 2008.



Sawyer pictured with his family: front, Joshua; middle row from left to right: Abby, Jack, and wife Alison.

unexpected realization. As a teacher, he was able to organize his thoughts more clearly and learned that teaching something is, in itself, a great teacher.

“One of the things I discovered was the amount of dogma that we all tend to accept. As I was developing materials to share with my students, I became much more critical of the ideas and information,” explained Sawyer. “I think that has been a real benefit, as it caused me to seek to really understand underlying principles and factors rather than accepting traditional explanations at face value. This willingness to question our own ideas is the source of innovation.”

While at Texas A&M, Sawyer’s plan of becoming a ranch manager came to fruition in a way he didn’t expect. A challenge existed in College Station—there was no place to conduct stocker cattle research projects. This led Sawyer to the McGregor Research Center in McGregor, Texas, to conduct projects, and to develop a research facility in College Station, which is now the Beef Cattle Systems unit. Starting from the ground up on a piece of property in 2007, Sawyer and his team built a location that now runs 200 cows year round, usually 200 yearlings on pasture, and a 240-head research feedyard. It became a cash flow positive enterprise within two years and has remained so to date.

In 2008, Sawyer moved into a management role over McGregor Research Center. As Superintendent of the research center, Sawyer managed a diversified operation with cow-calf (more than 1,000 cows), stocker, growyard, finishing enterprises, and hay and grain farming. This also required integrating research programs into the overall management system with the same challenges and disruptions that a commercial manager faces.

“I not only have felt the desire for innovative problem solving as a researcher, but have felt the pressing need for it as a manager,” said Sawyer.

A New Venture, A New Outlook

Now Sawyer will direct his passion for ranching and research toward another new venture. With the addition of an applied research division at KRIRM, Sawyer looks forward to beginning his work with the Institute and further cultivating the synergistic partnership with the East Foundation.

“The opportunity to work with the Institute and Foundation is literally a dream come true,” says Sawyer. “I plan to spend an initial period in discovery to identify the best opportunities to make immediate impact. Certainly, we will be looking for opportunities to develop innovative strategies that improve the resilience and sustainability of ranching operations.”

In his previous roles as a teacher, Sawyer credits the mentoring of students to be a tremendous element of reward, and he looks forward to working with the Institute’s ranch management graduate students in this capacity.

“High-performing students want challenging problems, and this in turn challenges us as mentors to stretch and grow,” explains Sawyer. “I am very excited about working with the KRIRM students because the nature of the students and projects combined creates a very unique learning environment, one that I believe will foster innovation and make a lasting impact on the industry.”

Through all the initial excitement of this new journey for Sawyer, he explains his hopes to complement the strengths that already exist within KRIRM and the East Foundation and anticipates that adding another perspective will foster

Continued on page 10

or the best way to solve, but with a deep network of people that you can turn to for assistance, someone in that network knows the answer or knows where/how to find the answer. It goes back to the old saying ‘it is not what you know, but who you know.’”

Post-graduation, Herrin and Gardner look forward to putting their experience to work within the beef industry. Herrin is interested in roles with the cow/calf or stocker sector and particularly a management role that might allow him and his wife to stay in Texas or the Southwest.

Gardner hopes to be part of an operation that has several moving parts and will allow him to apply the skills he’s developed at the Institute.

Both men say they’ll continue to be lifelong learners who strive to be involved – and improve – the industry. Gardner concludes, “I want to be part of an operation where I can continue to grow and learn while at the same time helping others to become leaders within the beef industry. I guess that is how I see giving back to the industry is through helping develop others.” 🏠

Upcoming Events



January 9-10, 2020
Managing the Cow-Calf Business
Fort Worth, TX



February 21-22, 2020
Application of Advanced Genetic Technology in Beef Cattle
Kingsville, TX
Sponsored by Neogen



March 10-13, 2020
Richard Mifflin Kleberg, Jr. Family Lectureship on Grazing Management
Ardmore, OK

Sawyer, continued from page 9

innovation in ranching systems through solutions-based research.

“The opportunity to develop a platform for applied research in the management of ranching systems is what attracted me most to this position,” says Sawyer. “I believe that few, if any, other organizations are currently engaged in this work, and I know that KRIRM and the East Foundation are truly committed to this mission.”

Sawyer is most proud of his family—he and his wife, Alison, have been married 23 ½ years and are raising three children who Sawyer says keep them busy through their love of sports, hunting, fishing, and hiking. Abby (18) is a freshman at the University of Texas, Jack (15) is a freshman in high school, and Joshua (8) is in second grade. 🏠

Connect with us online at <http://krirm.tamuk.edu> and on social media for our news and event information!



The Institute was a life changer. It really changed our whole course of opportunities.

Jason Van Tassell, KRIRM Class of 2012
General Manager, Sunlight Ranches, Wyoming



Photo by Sarah Herrin



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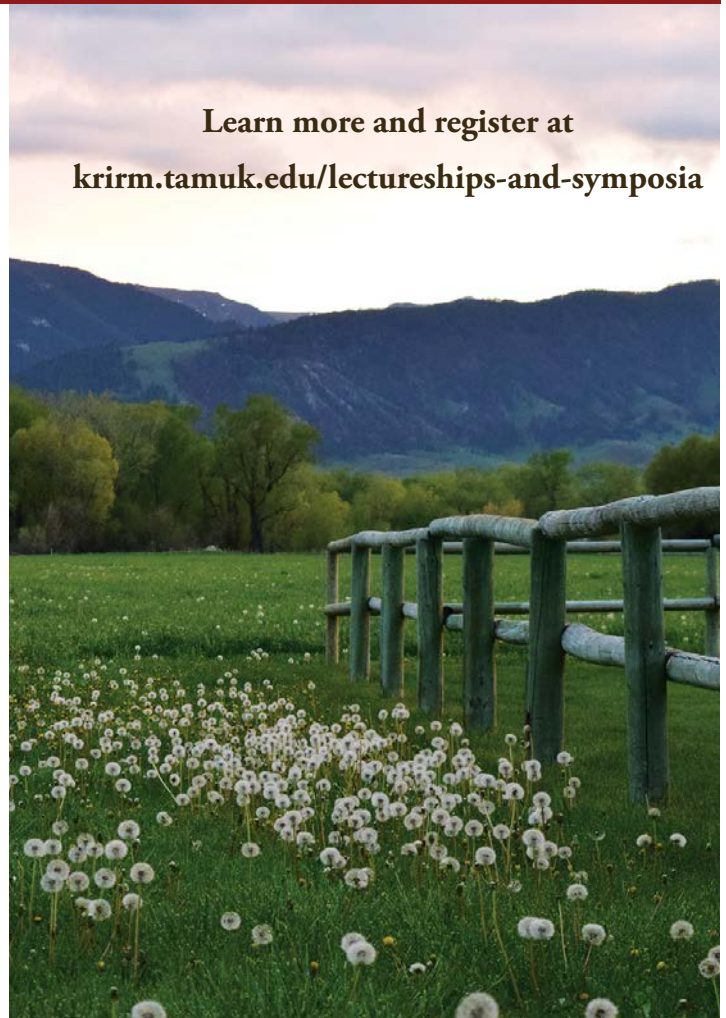
Testimonials from Lectureship and Symposium Attendees

“In my role as Manager of the Spring Creek Ranch for Matador Cattle Company, my team and I create value through the innovative development of maternal genetics for the ranches. The information received from the Genetic Technology lectureship has helped us understand how to apply these technologies in our daily operations to meet our customer’s needs. The presenters are leaders in their field and the information is current and straight forward. I look forward to the opportunity to attend more lectureships in the future.”

---J.D. Russell; Manager, Matador Cattle Company

“I had the distinct opportunity to complete my Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management with the King Ranch[®] Institute for Ranch Management in 2015. The lectureships and symposia I attended were insightful and practical. I was always impressed with the pragmatic approach taken by the instructors who artfully blended the practical with the theory behind the business of ranch management. The institute’s systems approach with an emphasis on profitable and sustainable ranches can be applied everyday as a ranch manager.”

---Gus Holm; General Manager, Vermejo Park Ranch



Learn more and register at
krirm.tamuk.edu/lectureships-and-symposia