

IKGA Leora Scholten Scholarship committee,

My name is Hailey Ehlers and I grew up on a small farm raising predominately meat goats. My family got into raising goats through our involvement in 4-H. This was at a time where showing goats at our county fair wasn't 'cool' compared to cattle, sheep, and swine. Toward the end of my 4-H career, goats gained popularity. We were approached by a few families to see if they could rent our goats for the fair. To this day we have provided numerous 4-H members goats to show at the local county fairs. These kids predominately live in town and otherwise would not have the opportunity to show livestock. When my 4-H career ended, I was asked to help at the county fair between Goat Interviews and Market Goat Premier Showmanship judge. I thoroughly enjoy seeing 4-H members stick to their goat projects and how their involvement, knowledge, and passion for raising and showing goats expands over the years.

Sharing my passion for the goat industry did not change when I was accepted into veterinary school. I became involved in the ISU Student AASRP (American Association for Small Ruminant Practitioner's) Club and joined the executive team. I began as part of the Speaker committee. This committee was in charge of bringing speakers in for our lunch and supper meetings. These speakers included school clinicians, practicing veterinarians, local producers, and numerous others that provided us more in depth knowledge than our regular curriculum provided. This past year I served as president. When I took over last spring, I wanted to provide members with more hands on experiences. Growing up with goats I never realized all the small things I picked up on until veterinary school. I found that things I thought were second nature – were completely foreign to most and this was my wakeup call. Out of 110 ISU members, only twenty-five members had some experience working with small ruminants. Only about half of those twenty-five students felt completely confident with basic skills and handling of small ruminants in front of a producer. As president I wanted to change this. We made sure that our wet-labs were focusing on things that a producer would expect a competent veterinarian to know. Basic handling, body condition scoring, aging, hoof trimming, blood draws, reproductive ultrasounding, and necropsies were the core of our wet-labs. I worked closely with clinicians to allow these wet-labs to be offered more than once. My goal was to allow anyone who wanted to participate the opportunity learn in a supportive environment.

As president I also stressed to our members the importance of promoting our industry. Over the past few years our club has made goat milk lotion to sell as a fundraiser, which has gained a lot of popularity within our school. This year I added opportunities to sell our lotion at public events. Along with selling the lotion we brought posters and focused on educating the public the utility of sheep and goats –we wanted them to know they are more than just cute animals in videos on Facebook. Our club also hosted a "Goats and Grapes" social event at the local wine bar that allowed event goers to come and sample numerous types of goat and sheep cheeses while enjoying wine. We had great success this year and I hope this event will continue to grow and even more of the general public will participate.

As I wrap up my last classroom year and enter into clinics, I am proud to have made the impact I had on the club and received such positive feedback on the club. The knowledge and experience that my members have gained has made all the work worthwhile. The connections I gained over the last three years of my involvement in the club has allowed me to find two small ruminant focused preceptorships for my clinical year. I additionally secured a spot in the Small Ruminant Elective this spring and the ISU Small Ruminant Rotation (November 2018). I plan to practice in central South Dakota, where the veterinarians know and focus everything on cattle, but they fall short in small ruminant knowledge. I know many producers stated it was hard to even find a vet that is willing to touch a goat. I want to change this. I want to be part of this limited field of Small Ruminant Veterinarians and I have high hopes to help grow the profession. I am thankful to be a part of a profession where I am able to focus my passion and look forward to a future in assisting small ruminant producers.

I thank you for your time,

Hailey Marie Ehlers