

CAAS MPH NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2

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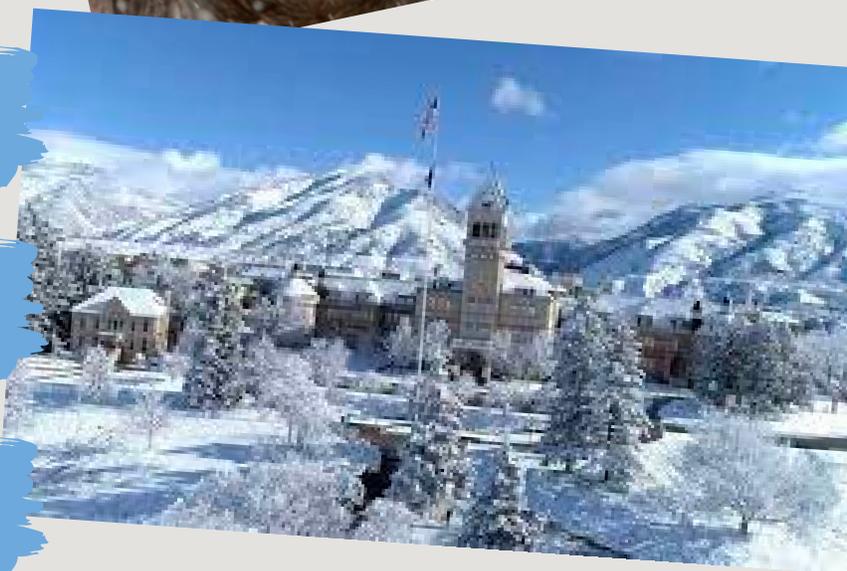
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College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences
UtahStateUniversity

A LETTER FROM THE ADVS DEPARTMENT HEAD

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As the new Interim Head for the Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences (ADVS), one of my first objectives was to get to know my home department again after spending nearly four years working chiefly in service of the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences. This deep dive into our academic programs opened my eyes to the excellent Master of Public Health (MPH) graduate program and its impressive faculty and students. The MPH program is offered in partnership with faculty from ADVS and faculty from the Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences department, allowing prospective students to select either veterinary public health or nutrition public health as their emphasis area.

Professionals with expertise in veterinary public health play a critical role in One Health – a transdisciplinary approach to “achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.” This interconnectedness has been very evident in recent months as poultry producers and wildlife specialists in Utah and around the world have been dealing with the consequences of the recent outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza. Students training in the veterinary MPH program learn how diseases spread among people, animals and the environment. And they learn to work with veterinarians, ecologists, and physicians to monitor and control public health threats by applying the core disciplines of public health and specialized knowledge of veterinary medicine.

A strong component of the MPH program is engagement by students via the Student Advisory board. The input of students in both the veterinary and nutrition public health disciplines is incredibly valuable to the continued improvement of this graduate program. I would like to highlight several students on this board who are in our department studying veterinary public health and thank them for this meaningful service.

After completing her B.S. in the ADVS department, Lexie Zwerdling embarked on a veterinary public health degree with an interest also in research in reproductive biology. After completing her MPH degree, she plans to attend veterinary school. Of note, Lexie was recognized this year as our department’s master’s student researcher of the year.

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Elody Fredette is one of our off-campus students, as she is a veterinary assistant working in Kentucky while completing her veterinary public health program. Elody decided to pursue the MPH degree to help prepare her for a career in veterinary medicine.

Dr. Morgan Richard is a veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As a public health veterinarian, she inspects imported livestock for foreign animal diseases, collaborates with U.S. and foreign government entities, communicates policy to stakeholders and responds to national animal disease outbreaks.

These three students' brief biographies illustrate how an MPH degree can advance students' professional goals in multiple ways: as a stepping-stone preparing students for application to veterinary medical schools or to enhance expertise after completing other graduate work.



Equally impressive are the faculty and staff that support the MPH program in ADVS, who are doing amazing things in and out of the classroom. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you can read about the amazing experience of Dr. Jane Kelly, who traveled to Kenya this fall to complete the ForRangers ultramarathon – a 230-mile, self-supported race to benefit wildlife rangers in Sub-Saharan Africa who fight poaching.

Great things are ahead for the MPH program. Most recently, we have launched a new effort to obtain formal accreditation from the Council on Education for Public Health for our program, which ultimately will be a great achievement for all involved. I am very excited to help support these fantastic students and faculty in the year ahead.

Abby Benninghoff, PhD
Interim Head of the Department of Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Science

¹ "One Health." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/>

² Read more here: <https://www.usu.edu/today/story/rising-avian-flu-cases-harm-producers-poultry-prices>

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JANE KELLY

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Instead of talking about specific diseases for the article this time, I thought I would talk about my recent trip to Kenya to do a 5-day self-supported ultramarathon (total distance 230 km). I spent 8 years of my childhood living in Zambia, Central Africa and Africa gets in your blood! I have always loved animals and for as long as I can remember, I have been horrified by poaching, particularly for ivory and rhino horn. When an opportunity came up to run a race in support of the Rangers that protect rhinos and other animals from poachers, I could not resist. COVID-19 delayed the race (it could not happen in 2020 or 2021) but this year it was on in late September. The name of the ultra is ForRangers Ultra and as the name suggests, some of the registration fees go toward helping the Rangers. ForRangers is a fundraising initiative set up to support the lives of wildlife rangers in sub-Saharan Africa. In partnership with Save the Rhino International, For Rangers raises money to improve training, purchase equipment, and support rangers' wellbeing and support their families. Separately from the race fee, I was able to raise \$2,000 for Save the Rhino International. The third partner in the race is Beyond The Ultimate (<https://www.beyondtheultimate.co.uk>), a British company that runs a series of self-sufficient, multi-day ultramarathons in different places around the world. In 2021, I did the Highland Ultra in Scotland and in February 2024 I will be doing the Ice Ultra in northern Sweden in the Arctic Circle. They also have a Desert Ultra in Namibia and a Jungle Ultra in Peru.

The race goes through 5 wildlife conservancies in Kenya. All but one of these (Ol Pejeta) are closed to the public, so we had the huge privilege of running through conservancies full of wildlife with no traffic or tourists. Within the first hour of the first day, I saw rhinos!! (Pictured to the right)



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Most of the rhinos in Africa are in south Africa, but we did see a lot of rhinos (both black and white rhinos) every day, as well as an amazing array of other wildlife including giraffe, zebras, many different types of antelope, elephants, ostriches, and buffalo. Some of the animals are quite dangerous, so there were Rangers (yes, the very people we were running the race for!) all along the route to keep us safe. The race team also patrolled the route frequently in Land Cruisers to keep us safe and there was even a helicopter to swoop down and help if needed. One of the runners was chased by a grumpy buffalo, but it was deterred when the helicopter came down! We had check points every few miles with fantastic volunteer medics (nurses and doctors) to make sure we were OK and help us with blisters and other injuries. When I say that it was a self-sufficient race, it mostly was. We had to carry all our own food, medical supplies, clothes, and sleeping bag. Cold water was provided at the check points to fill up our water bottles, hot water was provided in each camp for hot drinks and for our dehydrated meals, and tents were provided. Here is my favorite camp at the end of Day 2. On the hillside next to camp were herds of antelope, zebra, and several rhinos and elephants.



Each morning and night, we had a fire to sit around and keep warm. At this camp above, which was unfenced, the fire helped keep the lions away!! Here I am warming up by the fire.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JANE KELLY

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After we left this second camp and set off running on Day 3, some curious lions came to inspect where the camp had been! We heard hyenas around our camp overnight on the first night. Luckily the camp was fenced because it was a long way to the toilets.

As I said, we ran through 5 conservancies. The first wildlife conservancy is called Lewa. One of the highlights at this conservancy for me was that I met some of the rangers and their dogs. I was intrigued because the anti-poaching dogs are bloodhounds and bloodhound/doberman crosses instead of the German shepherds and Belgian Malinois dogs I was expecting. I talked to one of the rangers about it. He was running the race with us.

They have found that bloodhounds concentrate best on the task at hand (sniffing out poachers) and that crossing them with Dobermans increases heat tolerance in the dogs. Apparently, the Belgian Malinois dogs were biting people and the German shepherds are too intelligent, not with a single focus on smells. Fascinating to me, a dog lover. The dogs were so friendly as well!



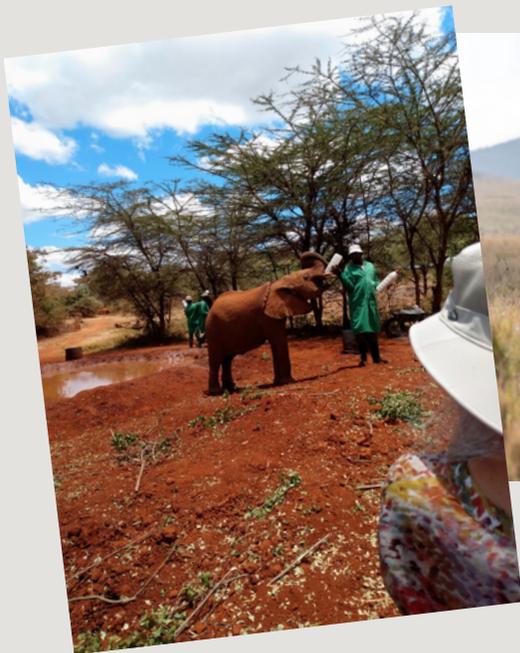
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The run was tough, no doubt about it. A total of 230 km (almost 150 miles) over 5 days with a full heavy pack and lots of hills. Here I am just reaching the top of one of the hills. Looking tired for sure.

I got lots of blisters that I do not normally get and they got infected, so my feet were suffering quite a bit. It was also quite cold at night so I didn't sleep well and I could not eat enough calories so I lost some weight. But, what an experience and what an incredible group of fellow-runners and the team that supported us and the rangers, of course. I will never forget it.



The Grevy's zebra is endangered. We saw quite a few of them. They have big fluffy ears. Here is some of the other wildlife we saw.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JANE KELLY

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I recently got a newsletter from Save the Rhino International with some information about how rhino conservation is going. Some good news: since 2005 black rhino populations have increased by 73% and 88% in Kenya and Namibia, respectively. These rhinos are classified as Critically Endangered so this is encouraging. Stopping poaching is only one of the challenges. The other is finding safe suitable habitat. In Kenya we had fireside presentations from local government officials that gave promising news about getting community involvement in rhino and elephant conservation. Both are large animals and elephants in particular are quite destructive to villages crops. Traditionally, village members have resented the destruction done by these large animals. By getting local villages involved in finding solutions (such as safe ways to keep elephants out of their crops (such as elephant fences), they become more interested in conserving the animals. To me, this is such a One Health approach to dealing with a problem!

This is where my story of this race really ties in to Public Health.

Another problem that was evident was drought. You can see in the photos how brown all the vegetation is. Some areas of Kenya are in severe drought and, obviously, this has an impact on the health of large mammal populations. After the race, I visited the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Nairobi. I have wanted to visit for many years. This place gives me hope for humanity because of what they do for wildlife. It was founded in 1977 by Daphne Sheldrick and is now run by her daughter Angela. It is an orphan elephant rescue and wildlife rehabilitation program. Rhinos are rescued also. The people that work here go to great lengths to rescue baby elephants that are orphaned due to poaching, drought, or even being stuck in mud (a by product of drought as water holes dry up). The elephants are hand-raised until about 3 years old and then rehabilitated and released back into the wild. Because the drought is so bad, they are keeping the elephants longer than 3 years of age so that they have a better chance of survival when released into the wild. The story goes that Daphne was trying to save an orphaned elephant and was working to develop a milk replacer to feed baby elephants. She was so heartbroken when the elephant she was working with died that she dedicated her life to developing a suitable elephant milk replacer and saving as many orphaned elephants as possible. When we visited in September, it was feeding time! The baby elephants all ran into the arena for their milk.



I love this photo of an elephant with Mount Kenya in the background. A mountain to be climbed one day!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JANE KELLY

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Many people have asked me why I participated in such a tough event when I could have just sent money to support ForRangers and Save the Rhino. The answer is quite complicated and the other runners doing the event understand more than most. Reasons include the extreme physical and mental challenge and sense of accomplishment, to be in Africa again, to see the wildlife, to truly understand the important work the rangers are doing and how dangerous their job is, to have memories that last a lifetime, and to be with like minded people. One additional thing I wanted to explore was how well my body would hold up after donating a kidney and a large portion of my liver. And, the good news is, I held up very well. I hope to get the word out that being a living organ donor does not preclude having a healthy and very active life. One final reason: we have friends in Kenya that we had not seen for many years, so it was a good opportunity to visit.



Jane Kelly, DVM, MS, MPH, DACVPM, DACVM
Veterinary Diagnostician and Biologist
Clinical Professor



STUDENT STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES

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"The idea of traveling abroad to learn about the Mediterranean diet never crossed my mind as most things these days can be learned online. I didn't realize how much I underestimated the richness of the learning experience when one is not only immersed into a new diet, but also into a new way of life. The people of Crete changed my life forever and I'm grateful that USU offered this opportunity to us MPH Nutrition students!"

-Luisa Hansen, MPH student



"Studying the Mediterranean Diet in Crete was one of the best experiences I have while completing my MPH in Public Health Nutrition. I gained so much knowledge and understanding about the key principles of Mediterranean health and nutrition while falling in love with the career all over again. I have a greater admiration for the magnificent Crete culture and cuisine, brilliant civilization, impressive mountain scapes and beaches, fertile valleys and island's rich culture. The whole program, professors, trainers specialists and chefs were just the best! It was a very exquisite experience to add to my professional career!"

-Fiona LoCicero, MPH student



MEDITERRANEAN DIET STUDY ABROAD

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Study in Crete this summer for 10 days! Learn about the traditional culture and cuisine of Crete and Mediterranean diet concepts. Gain hands-on experience, including visits to regional food markets, tours of food production facilities, food preparation, and exploration of wild, edible flora and terrain all while earning course credit.

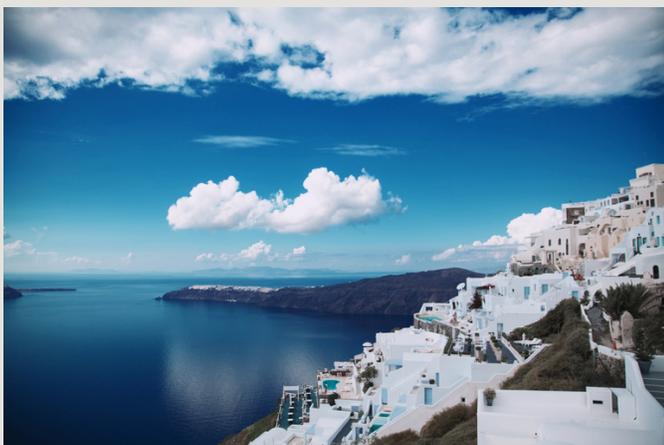
This year's Mediterranean Diet Study Abroad opportunity will take place from May 16-25th, 2023. Some of this year's featured experiences include:

- Olive oil groves and production facilities
 - Botanical hike
- Herbal medicine and bee-keeping workshop
 - Several cooking demonstrations
- Many shared Mediterranean diet focused meals
 - Beach day excursion

There are limited spots, so if you are interested be sure to apply soon!

Applications are due by January 15th and can be submitted through the study abroad website [here](#). Financial aid and scholarships are also available to help fund the experience.

To learn more, please contact Casey Coombs at casey.coombs@usu.edu or visit this [link](#) to view a recorded open house.



GUATEMALA STUDY ABROAD

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Set in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, in the heart of Maya culture, this course exposes participants to current agricultural and post-harvest practices in cocoa production for generating high quality cocoa beans used in chocolate making. We will explore artisanal practices for making chocolate and also experience chocolate-based beverages, one important and ancestral cultural tradition. Through observation of modern-day entrepreneurial models that local farmers and communities are engaged in, students will learn about the challenges and opportunities that come with creating, marketing and selling value-added cacao products. From a national perspective, the program will provide an overview of undergoing efforts to support and promote international commerce in the Guatemalan cocoa sector with stops at AGEXPORT and the Cacao Quality Lab. Additionally, students will visit Universidad del Valle in Guatemala City to learn about university-led initiatives that support entrepreneurship and product development and make a final stop at the national museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to appreciate the origins of cocoa and its rich history.

This study abroad program will take place from March 3-12, 2023. Students will earn 3 course credits for participating in this program.

Click [here](#) for more information or to submit your application!



FALL 2022 MPH GRADUATES

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We would like to congratulate our Class of Fall 2022 MPH graduates!



"I am currently a dietitian at Primary Children's Hospital and work with kids with Cystic Fibrosis. I love these kids and the field of CF so plan to stay here for a while.

I am looking forward to having a little extra free time now to explore some of my public health interests! So we'll see where that takes me :) I am excited to see what the future holds!"

-Jenna Stoker, RDN, MPH



Elaine Dawson, MPH

Elise Withers, RDN, MPH

James Williamson, MPH

Lydia Bangerter, RDN, MPH

Sarah Terry, MPH



Madison McRoberts, RDN, MPH

UPCOMING EVENTS

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AVMA Veterinary
Leadership Conference
January 5-7, 2023
Chicago, IL
Register [here](#).



UAND Annual Meeting
March 3-4, 2023
West Jordan, UT
More information [here](#).

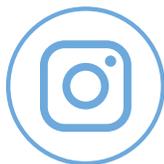
SOPHE 2023 Annual
Conference
March 21-24, 2023
Atlanta, GA
Register [here](#).



SOCIAL MEDIA

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Be the first to hear about everything public health related by following our social media handles! This is a great way to stay up to date on program changes, accreditation updates, public health events, job openings, project/internship opportunities, and more!



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