

Learning the Life of Dairy

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The Importance of an Internship:

Internships allow students to gain experience in real-world scenarios. They help you develop new skills and let you explore career paths while building professional networks. Internships are important to help set you up for success after graduation. I highly recommend them to all students.

Duties Performed:

Pushing – During this job I would "push" cows to and from the parlor. During the shift I would operate the vac truck and skid loader in order to clean manure out of the alley. I had to push 11 pens containing about 40 cows each. During this time, I increased production efficiency by helping the parlor rotate cows.

Milking - During this job I worked in the parlor and milked the cows. First, I push cows into the parlor stalls, wipe manure from the teats, dip teats in soap, strip each teat, wipe soap off, attach teats to milker, post dip with iodine, release from parlor, and repeat for the next rows. We milk approximately 450 cows (depends on if we're in a calving season) per shift and have 2 shifts a day.

Calf Care - I worked in the calf barn where we care for the calves from the day they're born up to a couple months. Most of the tasks were making milk replacer and bottle-feeding calves, but I also had to process calves during or calving season. I would have to vaccinate, tag, and feed colostrum to the new calves born.

Skills Developed:

Operating a skid loader – I learned how to operate a skid loader using different attachments to perform tasks. Some of these include transporting bedding to different parts of the farm, leveling out bedding, and scraping manure off the ground and into our pit to be processed.

Working in a parlor – I learned all the skills needed to work in a parlor including parlor set up, the milking process, parlor tear down, how to identify/treat mastitis, and communication skills with coworkers to complete tasks such as cow rotation in parlor.

Cattle handling – I had no livestock experience before this, so I learned how to handle cattle in a positive way. Something as simple as your relation to their flight zone can make them move to where you want without causing stress.



New Experiences:

My two favorite new experiences were processing the new calves and operating the vac truck. When the calves were born we had to weigh them, document them, tag them, give some vitamins, and feed them colostrum. I had never seen this process before, so it was fun to experience. I also got to operate the vac truck we use to suck up all the manure and urine out of the alley ways. I've never operated any heavy machinery, so it took a while to get the hang of.

How this Internship Impacted Me:

This internship allowed me to gain cattle experience and learn about the dairy industry. I was debating about what career path I wanted to take after graduation, but after this internship I know that dairy is the life for me. This was an experience I will never forget and hope to have more like it.