

Valleywide News



VALLEYWIDE VETERINARY SERVICES

Valleywide Welcomes New Vet, Dr. Gabrielle Lumkes

After spending time as an extern in 2019, Dr. Gabrielle Lumkes is excited to return to Valleywide Veterinary Services for a full-time position starting on June 21st. Gabi grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania with a family who spent most of their time together outside exploring. She found a passion for large animal veterinary medicine her junior year of high school, where she realized it combined her love for agriculture, working outside, and problem solving (as she comes from a family

of engineers). She attended Purdue University for her undergraduate and DVM, tracking Food Animal her clinical year. Her professional interests include surgery, calf health and management, milk system analysis, and small ruminant medicine.



Outside of veterinary work, Gabi enjoys training for triathlon, backpacking, skiing, and water sports. She is moving to Vermont with her husband Matt, who is

also a Purdue graduate. They look forward to spending time outside together, exploring and enjoying all the beauty Vermont has to offer.

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Bilingual Training, Translation and Protocols

Valleywide offers workforce education services in both English and Spanish. Formal or informal training sessions may be held to get new employees up to

speed or to reinforce and review animal care protocols for experienced workers. Thinking about making some changes? Having a veterinarian explain why will im-

prove employee buy-in and reduce protocol drift later on. Training sessions can be developed on any topic with farm specific details. Call the office to learn more.

Milk Lab Tops 15,000 Samples

Valleywide's milk lab has processed over 15,000 individual cow and bulk tank milk samples since 2018. Culturing milk gives important information to help improve milk quality and reduce SCC. Thank you to all of the farms that submit milk to our lab!

Pair Raised Calves Grow Bigger, Stress Less

Dr. Elizabeth Martens

We've long known that calf hutches – the bovine equivalent of social distancing – are best for calf health. Diarrhea and pneumonia cases are less likely to spread among individually raised calves. But, group housing is growing in popularity and has some economic and animal welfare benefits. It opens up opportunities for better socialization and natural behavior, different milk feeding options and potentially less labor. Though there are risks to group housing, we can find a happy medium with paired housing, which combines the benefits of both systems.

Research has shown that pair raised calves aren't at any higher risk of developing disease than their individually raised counterparts.

Calves can be placed in pairs immediately at birth or farmers may choose to wait until 5-10 days of age in order to get past the most likely age for scours. Other recommendations include pairing at 3 days of age to make sure calves are drinking milk well, or waiting until 30 days of age when the risk of pneumonia is less. No matter when calves are paired, they should not be more than 7 days of age apart. Cross sucking remains a concern, but can be reduced by using low flow nipples and feeding at least 6 quarts of milk every day. If at all possible, construct calf pens with headlocks where calves can stay for 15 minutes after milk feeding; the time directly after feeding is when there is a higher likelihood of cross sucking.

Pair raised calves have better weight gain with the same amount of milk intake as individually raised calves. They begin to eat starter grain earlier and end up eating more of it which improves early rumen development. Perhaps more importantly, paired calves seem to cope better with routine stress and therefore spend less energy reacting to new things. At weaning, pairs of calves spend significantly less time vocalizing and go on to transition better into group housing. In one study, calves that had been paired spent 3 more hours resting on weaning day than the individually raised calves.

“Paired calves seem to cope better with routine stress and therefore spend less energy reacting to new things”

Pair raising systems are simple to construct. It may be as easy as removing every other divider between calf pens, or pushing 2 calf hutches together and combining the outdoor enclosure. In one herd that went from individual to paired hutches, the overall footprint of the calf area decreased by 30%.

Each calf still needs 30 square feet of space, their own hutch and their own grain and water buckets.

Consumers are generally displeased at the fact that dairy farmers remove calves from their mothers soon after birth, despite the health and safety reasons we have for doing so. The possibility that **calves are raised in groups or with a buddy improved consumers' perceptions**, according to one focus group. Cows are herd animals; keeping calves isolated for the first months of their lives doesn't allow for natural behavior and may be causing more stress than we are aware. Paired housing is a great opportunity to improve animal welfare on your farm as well as your bottom line. Ask us at your next herd check about pair raising calves!

