

THE MANAGER

GENERATION NEXT

These young people's career choices keep them connected to dairying. And they couldn't be happier.

Careers close to dairy

CARIE TELGEN

Veterinarian

Canton (N.Y.) Animal Clinic

As a large animal veterinarian in Canton, N.Y., Carie Telgen has ample opportunity to work with dairies. From routine herd checks to consulting with her clients, she stays close to dairying.

"I always wanted to be a veterinarian," says Telgen, who grew up on a 150-cow dairy in Shoreham, Vt. "Growing up on a farm, I was always fascinated with the work the veterinarian did."

Telgen almost didn't pursue her dream. After graduating with a B.S. in animal science from Cornell in 2003, she became a herd manager on a dairy. "I had thought it was crazy to go to school for four more years," she says.

Then Telgen met one of her mentors, Dr. Klopfenstein, the dairy's veterinarian, who encouraged her to pursue her dream. After a year and a half as a herd manager, she applied to veterinary schools and chose Purdue University in Indiana.

"It's like boot camp," Telgen says of her four years in vet school. Of her 65 classmates, she was the only one specializing in dairy. Eight others wanted to work with beef and equine. The remainder planned to become small animal veterinarians.

"I think the biggest challenge for new veterinarians is the gap between the cost of veterinary education, in the range of

\$150,000 to \$200,000, and the average starting salaries of large animal veterinarians," Telgen says.

She was offered salaries between \$55,000 and \$72,000 when she applied for jobs.

Telgen met her boss at the Canton Animal Clinic at a veterinary conference during her senior year at Purdue.

"I love working with

the farmers and their animals," she says. "As a veterinarian I hope to be a valuable asset to the productivity and profitability of our clients' businesses."

In particular, Telgen enjoys performing surgery, consulting with farmers on health issues such as mastitis outbreaks, developing protocols and providing education. Her day begins between 6 and 6:30 a.m. at the clinic, and her first herd check is usually scheduled for 7 a.m. When Telgen gets back to the office in the afternoon, she makes phone calls, does paperwork and reviews lab work.

"Veterinarians have a very important role to educate the public about farmers' husbandry practices, as well as to address the public's concerns for a safe and abundant food supply," Telgen says.

That is only one of several changes in a veterinarian's role that Telgen sees. Compared to the past, today's veterinarians generally spend more time on an individual dairy, consulting and teaching, rather than working on several farms on a given day.

"It's important to provide value-added services to clients so we can help dairies to be profitable and productive," Telgen says.

For veterinarians, career options run the gamut from owning a practice to working in industry, regulatory, academia or research. "Within each of those areas, there are various ways to advance," Telgen says. "There are also certifications that one can achieve, such as becoming a board-certified dairy practitioner."

MALLORY PERKINS

Dairy Focus Consultant

Cargill Animal Nutrition

Mallory Perkins has been a Dairy Focus



"Growing up on a farm, I was always fascinated with the work the veterinarian did," says Carie Telgen, a large animal veterinary in Canton, N.Y.

FYI

■ Contributors to this article are Kim Skellie and Deborah Grusenmeyer of PRO-DAIRY and Eleanor Jacobs, an agricultural journalist.

■ The Pennsylvania Center for Dairy Excellence has a power point presentation featuring 33 different careers in the dairy industry. Find it at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org

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Mallory Perkins, a dairy focus consultant with Cargill Animal Nutrition, believes if a person works hard and proves herself, opportunities will present themselves.

Consultant (DFC) for Cargill Animal Nutrition for six years. “I provide feed products and, more importantly, nutritional and management services to dairy farmers to help them reach their goals and increase farm profits.” Perkins says.

Perkins knew from the time she was in high school that she wanted a career tied to the dairy industry. “I was raised on a small dairy in a pro-agriculture school system with a great FFA program,” she says. “That foundation gave me the desire to stay in the dairy industry.”

In college, first at SUNY Cobleskill and then Cornell, Perkins initially focused on agricultural finance and interned at Farm

Credit and the Farm Service Agency. “I realized that my passion was to be out on farms interacting with and solving problems for owners and managers more than what a finance job provided,” says Perkins, who earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science in 2005.

Perkins was drawn to the feed and nutrition business where she can be on farms every day. After training in western New York, Perkins moved to her home area in Washington County.

Her career choice has not disappointed her. Perkins particularly enjoys the diversity of her work. “My passion is nutrition and working with cows and people,” she says. “However, my job allows me to go beyond that. We have the opportunity to bring value-added services to the farm as well.”

Perkins works with her customers on a variety of dairy farm-related issues including calf and heifer programs, labor management, records analysis, forage quality and financials.

Perkins has followed this credo in her personal and professional life: “...work hard, prove yourself and opportunities will present themselves.”

She has a couple other pieces of advice of value to young people in their careers:

- Technical skills can be taught; personal skills cannot, she says. And personal skills are very important. Customers want two things: Someone who can help solve their problems, which requires technical skills, and someone who cares about their business. The later requires an ability to relate and empathize.

- Know your strengths and capitalize on them. Know your weaknesses, too, but find someone to help you with those.

Recently, Perkins was one of 20 women working for Cargill to participate in a Women’s Leadership Conference. “It was a chance to interact with people up the ladder in Cargill, network with others and participate in a mentoring program,” she says. “For everyone, knowing people and having connections will be powerful in determining your future.”

A career in farm finance isn’t just about numbers. Clients expect their loan officer to know everything from current events to environmental issues, says Stephen Tudhope with Farm Credit East in Batavia, N.Y.



STEPHEN TUDHOPE

**Loan officer
Farm Credit East**

Stephen Tudhope combines his two passions – agriculture and finance – as a loan officer with Farm Credit East, based in Batavia, N.Y. Tudhope, who grew up on a Vermont dairy, attended Cornell University. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in animal science in 2007 and has worked for Farm Credit ever since.

While at Cornell, Tudhope took advantage of as many opportunities as possible to gain exposure to all facets of agriculture. As a member of Farm Credit Fellows, he did a job shadow in a Farm Credit office and traveled to New York City’s financial district, among other activities.

Tudhope was also in the Dairy Fellows program which gives young people opportunities to meet industry leaders, visit many dairies, travel within New York and across the country, and perform in-depth analysis of dairy businesses. Tudhope also did a 10-week semester exchange at Cal Poly in San Louis Obispo, Ca.

This wealth of college experiences honed Tudhope’s people skills, important for a loan officer. The career is as much about personal relationships as it is finance, says Tudhope.

“Clients expect their loan officer to know current events, business costs, tax codes, legislation, environmental issues,” Tudhope says. “I read a ton of things, from the Wall Street Journal to The Economist.” It’s important to be able to talk with his clients about everything from flowers to what he’s read about finance in the popular press.

Tudhope’s background in agriculture, accumulation of experiences and exposure to business and management styles serve him well as a loan officer with a diversified portfolio. Though 70% of his clients are dairy owners, Tudhope also works with cash crop and vegetable growers.

“I understand what farmers I work with are going through,” he says. “I like the diversity of the job.” He also appreciates the autonomy he has to make independent decisions about loans.

Like any company who wants to attract and retain young people, Farm Credit has a comprehensive training period for new hires. It includes spending time with what Tudhope calls “seasoned loan officers” and participating in educational programs in specific areas such as the tax code and tax planning.

“Farm Credit also supports advanced education,” Tudhope says. For example, it assists employees who want to earn a certified public accounting degree. □