CONTEXT STATEMENT
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I joined Washington State University (WSU) Extension on May 16, 2011, as an Assistant Professor/Regional Livestock Specialist stationed in Kennewick, WA. I am also an Affiliate Faculty member in the WSU Department of Animal Sciences. My formal training is as a ruminant nutritionist; and I specialize in cow/calf nutrition, grazing livestock management, and forage quality. In addition, I work with producers of a variety of livestock species that are raised in the diverse environs of the Columbia Basin and Washington State. My programmatic responsibilities include developing evaluation-based educational curricula and programming with a complementary applied research program. In addition, WSU Extension has an expectation for scholarly activity, leadership and teamwork, and procurement of extramural funding for my programs. I focus each component toward farmers, ranchers, industry professionals, and youth livestock producers in the Columbia Basin (Benton and Franklin Counties) and Washington State. I endeavor to create synergies between my programs and consumers of agricultural products as well. As an Extension faculty member, I work cooperatively with producers and collaborate with faculty and Extension professionals both within the WSU system and at universities throughout the western United States. An overarching priority of my programming is to support the WSU Extension strategic goal of Agricultural Productivity and Food Security. I am pleased to report that strong support from the Benton and Franklin County Commissioners is ongoing.

The Columbia Basin is unique as an agricultural region. My focus is livestock; but many cross-connections exist among livestock, hay and forage production, range management, cropping systems, and by-product feeds. A significant cattle feeding and beef processing industry is present in our area. These factors represent a vast set of opportunities to provide impactful programs throughout the region. While farms and ranches in my area vary greatly from small to very large, my programs support all sizes of agricultural enterprises with equal vigor. I believe that being nimble and therefore able to anticipate and react to critical and emerging issues related to sustainable food animal production is of paramount importance. While I am trained as a ruminant nutritionist, my programs for feedlot and dairy producers are targeted to areas not covered by the consulting nutritionists that are the norm for large Confined Animal Feeding Operations.

Both statewide and county data are important in developing programming as many livestock interests cross county as well as state lines. Survey data reported that Washington State is home to 37,249 farms encompassing more than 14.7 million acres with the average size farm being 396 acres. Total cropland in Washington State is approximately 7.5 million acres with 4.3 million acres harvested. The average age of a principal operator increased from 53.2 years in 1997 to 57.0 years in 2007. The inventory of cattle and calves, beef cows, dairy cows, hogs, sheep, and goats was approximately 1.1 million, 212,000, 267,000, 20,000, 45,000, and 27,000, respectively. Related to the livestock industry, Washington State also produces nearly 2.8 million tons of hay, haylage, grass silage, and greenchop on nearly 749,000 acres (United States Department of Agriculture, USDA; National Agricultural Statistics Service, NASS; 2012 Ag Census).

In the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture, the total value of agricultural products produced in Benton County was about $923 million and the total value of livestock and poultry and their products produced was approximately $55.8 million (only 2007 data available for livestock and poultry). Franklin County accounted for $740 million in total value of agricultural products and the value of livestock, poultry, and their products was $236 million. The annual inventory of cattle and calves in Benton County is approximately 86,000 head, and 93,000 head are inventoried in Franklin County (not including animals destined for feedlots and processing). In Benton County, nearly 16,000 acres were dedicated to forage production; and in Franklin County, about 70,000 acres of forage were produced (United States Department of Agriculture, USDA; National Agricultural Statistics Service, NASS; Census of Agriculture 2012).
One of my first tasks upon my appointment to this position was to conduct a formal needs assessment based on input from a variety of stakeholders (i.e., producers, supporters of youth livestock programs, industry professionals, and faculty colleagues) that reside in Benton and Franklin Counties as well as from across Washington State. Input was collected from a series of face-to-face discussions with the stakeholders, observations of the state of the livestock industry, as well as written and online statistical resources.

During the needs assessment, the stakeholders revealed eagerness to have WSU Extension serve as a conduit to the science at WSU, as well as other institutions. The stakeholders want an effective WSU Extension system to support their operations and provided several key suggestions including:

- Provide understandable and relevant scientific information that is feasible for producers to apply in their operations.
- Assist producers in understanding bench-top science and how it has a future application.
- Be a visible representative of the WSU Department of Animal Sciences (I am an Affiliate Faculty member in that department.). Network with faculty and alumni to set the course for the livestock industry in the region. Work collaboratively with WSU Veterinary Extension.
- Support 4-H and FFA activities and provide for programming, such as livestock nutrition education, Steer of Merit, and Lamb of Merit.
- Utilize the input and leadership of “young producers,” young adults returning to farms and ranches.

In response to the stakeholder input, I have developed evaluation-based Extension programming with a focus on three key points:

- Beef cow nutrition and reproduction
- Livestock production, safety, and quality
- Management systems focused on reducing production costs

In the quest for other avenues for developing Extension programming and outreach for stakeholders throughout Washington State, I have facilitated the formation of a ruminant nutrition/forage quality research and Extension group. I am actively engaged as member of the WSU Extension Beef Team and the Washington Animal Agriculture team. I am also a member of the WSU Irrigated Agriculture Team that provides an effective electronic communication system to producers statewide. In professional development, I am in the Western Extension Leadership Development (WELD) program. At the national level, I am the WSU representative to the USDA Multi/State Activity W-2012: Improving ruminant use of forages in sustainable production systems for the Western U.S. In addition, recently I have agreed to serve as Washington State Co-coordinator for the National Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program along with Jack Field of the Washington Cattlemen’s Association.

**Vision for the Future**

I will continue to build on my three key focus areas and expand both Extension outreach and applied research. I have identified a novel approach to reducing invasive annual grasses while rejuvenating beneficial native species in rangeland. My plan is to lead a regional collaborative effort to apply the technology and follow-up with grazing management in a comprehensive applied research and Extension program. Another collaboration with Tim Lawrence is being set into motion to investigate ways to provide integrated pasture management for both pollinators and livestock. In addition, the high-impact opportunities of BQA will be a high priority in my future programming.

I will continue to respond to stakeholder input and needs in developing my programs. In total, my programs and projects will reflect my desire to bring forth the relevant information on which our producers and other stakeholders depend.