

Rob Zelinsky
2020 Art Pope Award Recipient

Background:

Rob is from Dickinson County, Iowa near Terril (population 367) which is in NW Iowa about 20 miles NW of Spencer, Iowa. Rob grew up around Suffolk sheep. He graduated from North Dakota State University with a B.S. degree in Animal Science in 1992 and also completed a M.S. degree in Ruminant Nutrition at NDSU. He was at NDSU during a time when the university was widely recognized as one of the top purebred sheep operations in the U.S. under the direction of shepherd, Wes Limesand, and faculty member, Professor Bert Moore. We were fortunate to hire Rob in 1994 to take over management of the Sheep Unit at the UW-Madison Arlington Agricultural Research Station after the retirement of long-time university shepherd, Jim Elphick. Rob did a wonderful job of management of the sheep flock and working with students and Wisconsin sheep producers. During part of Rob's tenure at UW-Madison, his wife, Christy, served as the Extension Livestock Youth Specialist in the Department of Animal Sciences. In 2000, Rob and Christy left UW-Madison for Waterloo, Iowa where Rob served as the Animal Science Instructor at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Iowa. He filled the position previously occupied by another nationally recognized Suffolk breeder, Bob Kimm, upon Bob's retirement. Rob left Hawkeye Community College in 2004 to become the Sheep Unit Manager at South Dakota State University; where he worked with the faculty member in charge of the sheep program and Wisconsin native, Dr. Jeff Held. Rob brings us up-to-date on his more recent activities and those of his family in the following narrative that he supplied to me.

Dr. Dave Thomas, Emeritus Professor of Sheep Management and Genetics, Department of Animal Sciences, UW-Madison

From Rob Zelinsky:

Currently I work for Hubbard Feeds as their Small Ruminant Nutritionist dealing specifically with Sheep and Goat Nutrition, Technical Support, and Sales. I have worked for Hubbard for 8 years and just started this particular role full-time in March 2020. Like many of you, I spend much of my time with family and livestock activities. We still run a flock of purebred Suffolk ewes near Brookings, South Dakota. We have dabbled in cattle, goats, and pigs as the kids have gone through their 4-H years.

The six years we had in Wisconsin working with sheep producers and youth livestock kids were very valuable to Christy and me. I was lucky to be part of such a strong sheep program at UW-Madison that Art Pope and Jim Elphick built and Dave Thomas and Yves Berger expanded and molded that provided great teaching, extension, and research programming for the state and nation. Plus, I had the opportunity to work with such a diverse, talented, focused, and driven WSBC Board and the Planning Committee for their signature event – the Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference. I learned a lot and found that things were done “First Class”. Wow, what an event!!

Christy works at the Brookings Middle School in an alternative classroom assisting students with academic and emotional support. Her second job is keeping everyone going in the right direction at home, and, lastly, she makes sure everything is in order in the barn. She spends time volunteering in our church, 4-H, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Friends of Baseball.

Riggen, born in Madison, is a Junior at South Dakota State University majoring in Animal Science with an emphasis on business and production and will also get a Swine Certificate upon graduation. He has had 3 very interesting internships in the swine industry in Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa. He looks forward to graduating next spring to pursue a career in the swine field.

Rhett is a Senior at Brookings High School. Christy and I have enjoyed watching him conclude a very successful football season, and we hope to watch him play some baseball this summer. Rhett is headed to William Penn University in Iowa to play college baseball and major in Psychology. If things don't work out to play baseball this summer due to the Covid-19 issue, we will still enjoy future commutes to Iowa as Rhett continues his baseball career.

Raesa is a Freshman at Brookings High School. She is on the livestock judging teams for both 4-H and FFA, participates in Fellowship of Christian Athletes, spends her summers prepping lambs for shows, and is heavily involved in the day-to-day sheep activities at the farm. She whips her brothers into shape when they get out of line!

Thanks for the recognition with this award. It means a lot coming from a producer-driven organization and being named in Art's honor. I want everyone who was a part of the WSBC when we were in Wisconsin to know how much Christy and I appreciated the reception and support given to us during that time. We will always look at our time in the "Badger" state very positively.



Zelinsky family from L to R: Rob, Riggen, Rhett, Raesa, and Christy.