

in the MARGINS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

Faculty Profile: Cole Ehmke

By Cole Ehmke, Assistant Extension Educator

G'day! What a pleasure it is to be able to share with you a bit about myself and my work here at UW. Many of you I've encountered in the state, but when I meet someone it's not possible to explore all our interests.



Originally I'm from a dryland wheat/sorghum/triticale/rye farm in west-central Kansas, and I studied on a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Sydney's AgEcon department (in Australia) before working at Purdue University in their Center for Agricultural Business, and then here at UW. As you know, UW is a wonderful place to be, and I've thoroughly enjoyed being here.

About myself, actions speak louder than words, so let me talk about where I'm spending my time.

As you may know, the Department has two extension specialists who spend 100 percent of their time on extension work – John Hewlett and myself. John's work in farm management and mine in ag entrepreneurship and personal finance have been pretty complimentary. For instance, this last winter he and I collaborated to offer a nine-session course to new and beginning farmers in the Big Horn Basin area. We spent a lot of time working with them on financial management and marketing topics (among others) and left the group with a much better understanding of how to manage their resources as well as explore new ventures. The course was intensive, but the group was so eager that they called us back for an extra session. We're planning on offering more of this type of work in the future – particularly as the financial situation in Wyoming deteriorates and people look to get the most from their resources and enterprises.

An effort I'm planning for later in the year is the *Food Safety, Security and Sources* conference (the theme of the 2009 Consumer Issues Conference), September 24th and 25th in Laramie. It is shaping up to be an excellent venue to learn about and discuss some of the things we're seeing in the food system – mark your calendars! Details are at www.uwyo.edu/consumerconference.

Much of my time is related to providing information that helps

people sort out the priorities in their lives – whether they're in ag or not. You may have seen the estate planning materials *Passing It On* or *Leaving A Lasting Legacy* -- www.uwyo.edu/uwces/passingiton.asp. Other programs include one about financial management concepts used primarily by people who have filed bankruptcy, another for people exploring new ventures, and my one-on-one work.

As I give these programs and drive around the state, I often see underused ag resources as well as overused ones (overgrazed pastures!). For the last few years I've been heavily involved with the Small Acreage Issue Team to facilitate getting good information on resource management into the hands of the land managers about effective management. Often they are people new to Wyoming's growing conditions, but commercial producers also benefit from our efforts. The *Barnyards and Backyards* magazine, for instance, covers everything from noxious weed identification/control to landscaping to ag venture development. We also do workshops, but the magazine we've found to be very appealing (take a look at some articles and subscribe at barnyardsandbackyards.com).

As you may have noticed, I'm also the editor of *In the Margins*. In the Department we're aware of the need to keep connected with our stakeholders and alumni. Our aim is to keep you informed, and we'd like to make it interesting too. You'll see a mix of news and profiles about our many and excellent people and projects.

As to research, I've been working on a couple projects to profile both small and large land managers about their operations so that we can uncover their educational needs – at the moment we're just getting back the early results of one of our surveys.

Finally, I'm working on two video projects with a videographer who's come on board to the Communications department. First is a profile of a straw bale house that is going up this summer in Laramie – the aim is to help citizens understand what is needed if they were to undertake this energy-saving structure. The second is a series of interviews with some of Extension's notable educators with an aim to better understanding how to successfully connect with the citizens of the state. Both have begun well – look for some results toward the end of the year. ■

Want to receive this electronically? Send a note to editor Cole Ehmke at cehmke@uwyo.edu or (307) 766-3782.

Head's Column

Agriculture economics is more than just the focus on traditional crops. It is about making decisions where the natural resource base is part of the input into production, whether it be water, soil nutrients, or disease concerns. Agricultural producers have an integral understanding of natural environment around them.



Our department has always viewed itself as a program in which the core is in instruction, extension, and research in management and decision-making in agriculture and natural resources. This focus is still our priority. Though increasingly our students have been successful in developing careers in banking, public service, diplomacy, and energy.

I recently talked to a former student of ours who is now working for one of the larger coal mining companies. He is working with a program call AutoCad that helps coal companies measure how much coal they can effectively remove and how much added land they need to reclaim. He told me that what he is doing is really just economic efficiency analysis for the firm's operations, something that our program pushes. No, we don't teach AutoCad, but we do teach students the basics of business decision-making. And just as importantly we try to teach them how to learn so that when they are out in the work world their company can train them on the specific systems and they can learn it quickly — for their sake as well as for the company's sake. Our graduates become innovative and successful agricultural producers, bank employees, government agency personnel, energy industry employees, diplomats, and more. We are intensely proud of all of them. And your support through contributions, keeping in touch, and sending students our way is an important part. Thank you!

Roger Coupal, Head and Associate Professor

Position Searches Results

The Department was involved in two searches over the winter. As a result we are pleased to announce that Kristiana Hansen has been offered, and she has accepted, the position of **Assistant Professor in Water Economics**. She will be beginning this autumn.

The **Excellence Chair in Community Development** is on hold pending University Endowment uncertainties. The chair was envisioned as focusing on community economic development and natural resource policy with capabilities in the research, teaching and extension areas. The **Spicer Chair in Collaborative Processes** in Environment and Natural Resources, a Chair in the ENR program that potentially could be located in this Department, is also on hold pending University Endowment uncertainties.

Interview with Vanvig Awardee

Graduate student Milton Geiger is the winner of the 2008 Andrew Vanvig Graduate Fellowship. We're pleased to share this interview about him and his work. The Vanvig Award consists of recognition and a stipend for high quality graduate work and was created in honor of former Department Head (from 1957 to 1982) Andy Vanvig.



Q: What is the focus of your thesis work?

MG: My interests and research efforts focus on how Wyoming's energy-dependent economy will be altered if the federal government enacts climate change legislation. Specifically, I am considering impacts on tax revenues derived from coal, natural gas, oil, and wind energy. The effects are evaluated through the creation of a policy model based upon information from the Department of Energy.

Q: Do you have results you can share – key findings?

MG: Preliminary results suggest that Wyoming's tax receipts would actually increase with the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. An explicit price for carbon dioxide leads to increased demand for natural gas, which is the least carbon intensive of the fossil fuels. Increased price and production of natural gas offsets the declines in coal revenue. Due to an inelastic price elasticity, oil revenues are not adversely impacted. Wind energy grows quickly, but its low rate of taxation and small production compared to the fossil fuels limits its revenue creating ability.

Q: Who is your advisor?

MG: I have been fortunate to have two helpful co-advisors: Dr. Roger Coupal and Dr. Don McLeod. I speculate that Dr. Coupal and Dr. McLeod realized that I was in need of additional help for all the difficulties that would emerge in my thesis research!

Q: What do you aim to do when you finish ?

MG: I intend to complete my thesis early this summer before presenting the results at the Western Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting, which is conveniently located in Kauai, Hawaii this year. After finishing, I hope to obtain work in the renewable energy field. I am considering several government positions and opportunities with wind energy developers. My hope would be to remain in the great state of Wyoming, but the realities of the tight job market may make this infeasible.

Q: What drew you to UW AgEcon?

MG: First, the nature of ag and applied econ attracted me to the program as opposed to traditional economics. Agricultural and applied economics provides the necessary tools to examine interesting, real-world issues. Theory is certainly the basis of

Continued on back page.

We want your news! Alumni, faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students are welcome to submit news and photos. Send them to Cole Ehmke at cehmke@uwyo.edu.

Upcoming Presentations

WAEA annual meeting, June 24-26 in Kauai, Hawaii:

Graham McGaffin. *Factors Affecting Conservation Easement Acceptance: An Analysis across Colorado and Wyoming Landowners.*

Milton Geiger, Roger Coupal, and Don McLeod. *Federal Greenhouse Gas Regulation and Wyoming's Energy-Derived Tax Revenue.*

Scott Lieske, **Roger Coupal** and **Don McLeod.** "A Spatially Determined Production Function to Model Fiscal Impacts of Community Development." *The Economics of Land-Use Change: Advancing the Frontiers.* Washington DC. June 25-26, 2009.

Recent Presentations

Bastian, C.T., C.M. Keske, D.L. Hoag, D.M. McLeod, and A. D. Miller. *Factors Impacting the Potential Supply of and Demand for Development Rights in the Emerging Market for Conservation Easements.* (October 15) Invited seminar. Colorado State University, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Fort Collins, Colorado. **Bastian** presenting.

Ehmke, Cole. *Marketing the Market.* (17 February) Riverton Farmer's Market Volunteers. Riverton, WY.

Ehmke, Cole and Daniels, J. *Money Management for Difficult Times.* (14 January) Cheyenne, WY.

Ehmke, Cole. *Getting Started with Feedback.* (7 April) Weed and Pest Council Spring Supervisor's Conference. Cody, WY.

Ehmke, Cole & Hewlett, John. *Reaching Underserved Audiences: The Living and Working on the Land Project.* (31 April – 1 March 2009) Risk Management Education Conference. Reno, NV. **Hewlett** presenting.

Ehmke, Cole & Hewlett, John. *Leaving a Lasting Legacy.* (5 February) Fremont County Farm and Ranch Days, Riverton, WY.

Ehmke, Mariah. "Measuring the Role of Economic Behavior in Childhood Overweight and Obesity: The Family Food, Health, and Interaction Study" (April 15) With Kari Morgan, Enette Larson-Meyer, Christiane Schroeter, and **Nicole Ballenger** for the *University of Wyoming Nightingale Lecture.* Invited Presentation, Laramie, WY.

Peck, Dannele and **Rashford, Benjamin.** *Animal Disease: Using Economic Principles to Increase Profitability.* (December 7) Joint Winter Conference of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association and Wyoming Wool Growers Association, Casper, WY.

Rashford, Benjamin. *Agricultural Land Use and Ecosystem Services in the Canadian Prairies.* (November 20, 2008) Keynote Address. Forage Industry Stakeholder Forum, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Rashford, Benjamin. *Economics 101: How to Measure Indirect Values.* (November 21, 2008) Forage Industry Stakeholder Forum, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Rashford, Benjamin, Christopher Bastian and **Jeffrey Cole.** *Agricultural Land Use Change in the Prairie Pothole Region: Implications for Habitat Conservation.* (March 3–5, 2009) Presented at the Institute for Wetland and Waterfowl Research, 7th Student and Staff Symposium, Winnipeg, MB.

Publications

Bastian, C., D. Menkhous, A. Nagler, and **N. Ballenger.** "Ex Ante Evaluation of Alternative Agricultural Policies in Laboratory Posted Bid Markets." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 90(5) (2008): 1,208-1,215.

Ehmke, C. (April 2009) *Seven key estate planning documents to consider.* University of Wyoming Extension.

Ehmke, C. & Miller, A. (October 2008) "Farming Together: Developing the next generation of management", *Journal of Extension* [On Line], 46:5, Article 5IAW3. Available at www.joe.org/joe/2008october/iw3p.shtml.

Foulke, T., C. Bastian, D. Taylor, and **R. Coupal.** "Off-Road Vehicle Recreation in the West: Implications of a Wyoming Analysis." *Western Economics Forum* 7(2) (2008): 1-11.

Menkhous, D., C. Bastian, and **M. Ehmke.** "The Evolving Agricultural Marketplace: Selected Results and Western Implications from the Laboratory." *Western Economics Forum* 7(2) (2008): 44-51.

Rashford, Benjamin, Jared Grant, and Brian Strauch. "Economics of Predator Control to Protect Agriculture: The Unanswered Questions." *Western Economics Forum* 7(2) 2008: 25-32.

Schroeder, Alan. & Ehmke, Cole. (March 2009) *Avoiding a border war: Beginning a conversation with a neighbor about border fences.* University of Wyoming Extension.

Schroeder, Alan. & Ehmke, Cole. (December 2008) *The Tax Implications of Selected Drought Management Strategies.* University of Wyoming Extension.

Grants Awarded

Foulke, Thomas. \$10,000 from Wyoming Business Council for *Feasibility Study of Siting Advanced Coal-to-liquids Plants in Wyoming.*

Peck, Dannele, Benjamin Rashford and **John Ritten.** \$139,250 from Office of the Governor of Wyoming, Federal Natural Resources Policy Account for *Costs to Cattle Producers and Outfitters of Brucellosis Management Alternatives.*

Rashford, Benjamin and **Roger Coupal.** \$59,000 from UW Cooperative Extension Service for *Renewable Energy in Wyoming – Education for Individual Action.*

Taylor, David, Benjamin Rashford, Thomas Foulke, and **Roger Coupal.** \$34,298 from Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board for *Economic Analysis of Predator Management in Wyoming.*

In the Margins

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AgEcon 2008 Graduating Classes

The Department graduated 28 agricultural economists in
2008 — Congratulations!

Spring 2008 Graduates

Bartley Brogan, Ellsworth, NE	Lisa Sexton, Laporte, CO
Britanie Brewster, Butte, NE	Michael Wallace, Laramie, WY
Bryan Wilson, Lander, WY	Rachel Shipley, Lander, WY
Chase Dodson, North Platte, NE	Rita Palm, Wheatland, WY
Erin Query, Hillrose, CO	Ryan Farthing, Laramie, WY
Joel Martin, Genoa, CO	Stephanie Russell, Cheyenne, WY
Karen Reed, Dekalb Junction, NY	Trenton Roberts, Walsenburg, CO
Kaytlyn Cooksey, Roggen, CO	Tyler Anderson, Pine Bluffs, WY
Kendall Eisele, Laramie, WY	Jeffrey Cole (M.S.) Laramie, WY

Fall 2008 Graduates

Adam Stamp, Berthoud, CO	Kimberly Spearman, Pampa, TX
Christopher Johnson, Sidney, NE	Kyle Kilty, LaGrange, WY
Jaimy Cass, Hereford, CO	Shantel Anderson, Mills, WY
James Baldwin, Laramie, WY	Steven Snyder, Worland, WY
Katy Welsh, Laramie, WY	Brian Strauch (M.S.) Gering, NE



Milton Geiger, Vanvig Awardee Interview, cont'd

ag econ, but opportunities to apply theory through model building and econometric analysis are prevalent. UW emphasized these real world issues, such as my thesis topic. Also, the faculty and staff were very welcoming and helpful when I visited UW. They have proved to be the Department's greatest asset.

Q: How do you feel about being presented the Vanvig Award?
MG: Upon learning about the legacy of Andy Vanvig from last year's recipient, Brain Strauch, I was truly honored to receive the award. It provides a sense of pride to be recognized with an award in the namesake of those who have paved the way before me. I also recognize that my fellow graduate students are gifted scholars, so the recognition from the faculty and staff is especially humbling. In addition, the funds provide a welcome boost to the "slowly sinking" finances of a typical graduate student. The award will make the transition from graduate school back to the workforce much less stressful. ■

AgEcon 2009-2010 Graduate Class

AgEcon's M.S. degree recruiting efforts for Fall 2009 are now largely complete. Offers were made to six people and five of those offers were accepted. Including two students who began their studies this spring, we will have a 2009-2010 class of at least these seven students. Welcome!

**Kaytlyn Cooksey, Lane Gardiner, Mina Hejazi,
Katrina Krutkramele, Natalie Macsalka, Trent
Roberts, and Darlington Sabasi.**