



**Department of
Animal & Dairy Sciences**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Graduate Research Assistant – PhD student

Innovative approaches for improving cow handling on dairy farms

Overview: Seeking a graduate student to complete a 4-year PhD in Dairy Science within the Animal Welfare Science at UW-Madison (AWSUWM) program (<https://animalwelfare.cals.wisc.edu/>). You will be advised by Dr. Jennifer Van Os, an assistant professor and extension specialist in animal welfare. Start date: either September, 2022 or January, 2023.

Desired qualifications and relevant experience:

Required

- Independent research experience in dairy science, animal science, or related field
- Strong skills in:
 - written and oral communication
 - data organization and project management
 - reviewing scientific literature (searching, summarizing, interpreting, critiquing)
- Familiarity with U.S. dairy cattle production and management
- Interest in animal welfare
- Valid drivers license. Required to become a UW authorized driver. Project involves travel to Wisconsin dairy farms (vehicle will be provided).

Preferred

- Research-based Masters degree. Bachelors with significant independent research experience may be considered.
- Previous publications in peer-reviewed journals.
- Coursework or background in animal welfare and/or domestic animal behavior
- Experience with handling dairy cattle, collecting samples, behavioral video analysis
- Experience working with or on private, commercial dairy farms
- Conversational proficiency in Spanish
- Familiarity or interest in social science research (qualitative and/or quantitative)

How to apply: Attach the following in an email to Dr. Jennifer Van Os (jvanos@wisc.edu).

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. Statement of relevant experience, skills, and interests
2. CV including research publication record. For unpublished work, please indicate the status (accepted, submitted, in preparation).
3. List of 3 professional references with email addresses.
4. Transcript (unofficial ok)
5. GRE scores (screenshot ok)
6. TOEFL scores, if applicable (screenshot ok)

What happens next: Semi-finalists will be contacted for a Zoom interview with Dr. Van Os. Finalists will have the opportunity for an in-person interview (with travel expenses covered) to meet with Dr. Van Os, current students in the AWSUWM group and in the department, and to tour the UW-Madison campus and dairy research facilities. Applications will be reviewed until a suitable candidate is secured.

Research project details: You will conduct several research projects sharing the common goal to improve dairy cattle welfare, with focus on human-animal interactions on dairy farms. The first project will be to pilot test an innovative simulation tool for people to learn and improve basic cow-handling skills. Next, you will help develop and pilot test a separate tool for improving the attitudes of people working with dairy cows. You will then field test the efficacy of the aforementioned tool, including evaluating human behavior change over time and assessing cows' responses to handling. Each project is expected to generate 1-2 peer-reviewed papers, resulting in a dissertation comprising 3-6 chapters. You will also assist with a complementary objective to evaluate the attitudes dairy-farm workers hold toward working with dairy cows, with potential co-authorship on at least 1 paper. These projects will require traveling to Wisconsin dairy farms and communicating and interacting with owners and staff, along with collecting measures from dairy cattle. You must be able to drive, speak English fluently, navigate easily in dairy barn environments, and conduct yourself professionally on private farms without supervision.

Under the mentorship and guidance of Dr. Van Os, you will be expected to carry out all aspects of the experiments including planning and logistics, farm recruitment and scheduling, primary data collection on human-cow interactions and cow-based behavioral and production responses, video analysis, data processing and organization, statistical analysis, data visualization, and preparing presentations and manuscripts. You will have the professional development opportunity to assist with writing grants to obtain funding to pursue future, related research questions.

Graduate program details: You will enroll as a Dairy Science PhD student. The program will be expected to be completed in 4 years. You will receive 4 years of stipend, fringe benefits, and tuition coverage (students pay their own segregated fees). You are expected to complete coursework necessary for the degree program and pass a preliminary exam (written and oral) and defense. You will receive close mentoring from your major professor (Van Os) and additional support from your dissertation committee. There will be many professional development opportunities, including presentations at scientific conferences and opportunities to present at or attend dairy industry meetings to network with future employers or professional connections.

Please note that graduate admissions to the Dairy Science PhD program are conducted on a rolling basis. Do **not** apply for admission to the UW-Madison graduate school until selected as a finalist.

The Department of Dairy Science and the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences are committed to maintaining and growing a culture embracing diversity, inclusion, and equity. We believe these values are foundational elements of our excellence and fundamental components of a positive, enriching learning and work environment for students, faculty, and staff. <https://andysci.wisc.edu/>

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