

Endless Opportunities

By Nikki Hojer, AGJA Director

When I was in high school, I was commonly asked the questions where do you want to go to college at and what are you going to major in. The first question was obvious for me. I mean, I had dreamed of going to South Dakota State University for as long as I could remember. The second question was a little harder. I really did not know what I wanted to do. I thought about being a teacher, but I knew I would never be able to sit in a class room all day. I then thought about what made me happy and what I enjoyed doing. My conclusion was my cattle. What ever I was going to do had to deal with cattle, so I thought an Animal Science major would be good and that would give me a broad area to choose from.

At the end of my junior year in high school, we were able to job shadow. This gave me a chance to follow someone in the area of my interest for a day. My counselor lined me up with a company called Hematech. The lady I was following was a cloning specialist. I knew that cloning was around. I mean everyone learned about the sheep named Dolly in their science classes. What I did not know is that Hematech was cloning around 800 cattle a day. I had no idea there was this kind of opportunity in the cattle industry. This then sparked my interest in cattle reproductive work and that is when I decided that cattle reproduction is what I wanted to do when I graduated from school.

Even today I am learning more and more about the advancements that the cattle industry is making. Embryo transfer is now getting to be quite common these days and so is cloning. In animal identification, there are now tags that are electronic and can track an animal and record all their information on one chip. With the help of computers, nutritionist can now use programs that calculate a diet for them. All they have to do is insert certain information about that herd. Also with the help of computers, registration papers and animal tracking have improved. These are just a few changes that have occurred over the years and there will be many more.

My challenge to each and every one of you is to look into the cattle industry for opportunities that you never knew where there. Whether you are going through high school and trying to figure out what you want to major in, or in college and trying to figure out what career path you want to take, or you are already in the industry and just interested in what the industry is doing, you will be surprised at what is out there and how it could affect you and your operation. This industry has unlimited opportunities for everyone. So go on ahead and learn more about the industry that we all love.