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# UW-Madison Dairy Science: An Insider Perspective

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By: Margaret Scheuerman

As a first year masters student in the UW-Madison dairy science program, Kaitlin Buterbaugh may not be what many envision when they think of a dairy expert. With tied-back blonde hair and business casual attire, she wouldn't strike many as someone who values a hands-on approach to dairy science. In reality, Kaitlin is only one of many students who represent all that the UW-Madison dairy science program has to offer.

After graduating from Madison in 2023, current graduate student Kaitlin Buterbaugh decided that there was no better place to continue her academic career in dairy science than her alma mater, an institution that values a hands-on approach to a vastly overlooked field.

Buterbaugh, didn't always intend to pursue a career in dairy science, but unlike many students in the program, she didn't come from a dairy background.

Originally, she was on the vet track, stating her background was "mostly in small animal emergency medicine" working as small animal ER tech for a couple years before transferring to Madison.



Photo by Wolfgang Hoffmann



Photo by Adam Beard

While she loved animals, something about the field she was in didn't fulfill all she wanted out of her program, which is precisely what drove her to dairy science.

Kaitlin felt that what she needed was something like dairy science, something that allowed for more hands-on experience. She fell in love with dairy science through "doing research with dairy calves and lactating dairy calves as an undergrad."

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**"I don't come from a dairy farm, so getting that hands on experience really helps bridge that knowledge gap."**

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Now completing her masters, Kaitlin couldn't speak fonder of the program, emphasizing the unique experience that students have to learn about dairy science in a state that provides ample resources outside of academics.



Photo by Seth Moffit

"In our dairy herd management courses, each day, we had a different lecturer. A lot of times those lecturers were industry professionals, a lot of them local to Dane County," stated Kaitlin. She also added that they "had pretty much biweekly interaction" with those industry people, as well as farmers.

To Kaitlin, the future of dairy science here in Madison is something that can only grow stronger. Since beginning her role as a recruitment intern, she and her team have worked to develop a "department wide recruitment program," something they didn't have previously.

Looking toward the future, Kaitlin envisions herself as a professor, strengthening her relationship with the UW-Madison dairy science program even deeper.

Kaitlin Buterbaugh demonstrates that at UW-Madison, students have the opportunity to experience dairy academia in a way like nobody else, in a state like no other.

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