

Scholar Profile

Addison Hillman awarded Angus Commercial Cattlemen's scholarship.

by Taylor Edwards, intern



Addison Hillman, Brainerd, Minn., is one of four youth awarded the Angus Foundation's 2023 Commercial Cattlemen Scholarship. Hillman is majoring in animal science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), with a Krutsinger Beef Industry Scholars (KBIS) minor.

This minor is open to all UNL students and is designed to develop them into leaders in the beef industry by combining learning experiences provided by Nebraska beef industry leaders and UNL faculty.

"I joined the minor to see the beef industry from a new side," says Hillman. "It's crazy how different farming and ranching are between states, but we all have the same goal: to raise quality beef that is sustainable."

The KBIS program has provided Hillman the opportunity to grow her communication skills, network with people from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and learn more about all facets of the beef industry.

Life experience

Hillman says experiences on her family operation have shaped her cattle knowledge and built her confidence in her abilities as a cattlemaster.

"Our family was raising around 100 head; but, the drought a couple years ago hit us pretty hard, and we were forced to sell 75% of our herd," she says. "We had already spent a lot of our savings on hay to keep the herd as long as we could. That didn't set us back too bad, but then my dad got really sick, and nobody could figure out what was wrong with him. It became my job to calve out the cows, go to school and work my own job."

As her family overcame challenging circumstances, Hillman stepped into a larger role in her family's operation.

"This showed me that I can do hard things. It's really easy to just give up and say

something is too hard and move on to something that won't cause as much trouble," says Hillman. "The truth is, everything is going to be hard at some point."

Not only did the experience show her she is stronger than she thought, but it gave her a sense of pride and an even stronger work ethic, giving her drive to keep pushing until she reached her goals.

"Remembering this will help me to keep persevering when the inevitable hard times come again," she says. "I won't be afraid to take new risks because I know I will get through them."

Despite newfound confidence, Hillman has still faced struggles that weren't necessarily related to cattle.

"My biggest challenge is knowing when to ask for help," she says, admitting it's hard for her to swallow her pride and ask for help when she needs it. "Learning how to deal with problems as they arise is another good skill to have."

Passion for genetics

Her passion for the industry and interest in genetics were sparked in the eighth grade when she learned how to artificially inseminate (AI) her cattle.

"Picking out bulls and looking at their EPDs (expected progeny differences) was just so interesting to me," says Hillman. "Where did these numbers come from, and how do they know?"

When starting to investigate options for her college major, genetics kept coming up.

To follow her passion for genetics, Hillman selected the biology and biotechnology option when pursuing her animal science major, and she works in the genetics lab on campus.

"I want to look at the DNA sequence of cattle and see what I can do with it," says Hillman. "I was fortunate to start a project this last semester in the lab, where I looked

at a sire, dam and calf genome sequence to find mutations that were in the calf that weren't in the dam or sire."

Through this research Hillman hopes she can prevent calves with mutations from becoming major sires and passing on those mutations.

Hillman said, "This is a cool experience for me. I feel like I am making a small impact on the beef industry, preventing one problem at a time."

Commercial scholarship

The Commercial Cattlemen Scholarship supports students in the commercial cattle industry who use, or whose family uses, Angus genetics in their breeding program. Recipients for 2023 included Bryce Hoeltzel, Olsburg, Kan.; Addison Hillman, Brainerd, Minn.; Abigail Morse, Madison, S.D.; and Jacee Sumpter, Branson, Colo.

Hoeltzel was featured in the October 2023 issue (see page 114); Morse, in January 2024 (see page 142); and Sumpter will be featured in March.

Students pursuing an undergraduate degree in animal science, agriculture, rangeland management or a technical trade, and who are seeking financial support for the cost of their education at a university, community college or trade school, are eligible to apply for the Commercial Cattlemen Scholarship available through the Angus Foundation. Selection emphasis is placed on an applicant's knowledge of the cattle industry and their perspective of the Angus breed.

For more information on the Commercial Cattlemen Scholarship, including application details, visit <https://www.angus.org/Foundation/WhatWeDo/Youth/CommercialCattlemen>. **ABB**

Editor's note: A student at Auburn University, Taylor Edwards was the 2023 *Angus Beef Bulletin* editorial intern.