

Funded PhD Student Opportunity-

Advancing the welfare of dairy ruminant youngstock through a social science or multi-disciplinary lens

Are you passionate about animal welfare and interested in multi-disciplinary research? [Dr. Beth Ventura](#) is recruiting a highly motivated candidate for a PhD studentship to investigate the welfare of dairy youngstock through a social science or multi-disciplinary (social and natural sciences) perspective, depending on candidate interests. The candidate will be situated within the [Comparative Medicine and Integrative Biology](#) graduate program in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, USA.

The successful candidate will lead projects focused on addressing barriers to improving the welfare of young dairy animals in the dairy cattle or goat sectors. In addition to completion of required coursework, research activities within this PhD will include literature review, survey and/or interview development and implementation, participatory engagement research, data management, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, manuscript preparation, and presentation of research findings. The student will also be expected to collaborate with other students and scientists based in the US and internationally, participate in grant writing, and may also engage in applied ethology and other applied animal research depending on student interests.

Qualifications: The ideal candidate will have:

- An undergraduate and Master's degree, at least one of which is in a relevant field (e.g., animal science, behavior, or welfare; veterinary sciences; agricultural extension; or a discipline involving social science).
- Evidence of capacity for research excellence (e.g. journal publications, presentations at professional meetings)
- At least some background in social science (either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods)
- Interest in or experience engaging with key groups affiliated with the livestock sectors
- Comfort/willingness to be around working livestock farm environments
- Experience with and interest in working with diverse, multidisciplinary and international teams
- Excellent scientific analytical and writing skills
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Proactivity, independence, initiative, and excellent time management
- A US driver's license or ability and willingness to obtain one
- International applicants are welcome, but must demonstrate English proficiency

Funding: The successful candidate will receive a competitive annual stipend (final amount to be confirmed, but estimated ~\$35,500 USD/yr), plus full tuition reimbursement and health insurance.

Application process and timeline:

1. **Initial application** (expected period Oct-Nov 2025): Please email the following materials to Dr. Beth Ventura at venturab@msu.edu: 1) cover letter describing your research background, interests, and alignment with this opportunity 2) current CV, 3) Unofficial transcripts, and 4) contact information for three references. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.
2. **Informal interview** (expected interview period Oct-Dec 2025): Selected applicants will be invited for an informal online interview with Dr. Ventura to discuss research interests and program fit.
3. **Graduate program application** (application program deadline, Jan 3, 2026): The successful interviewee will need to apply and be formally accepted into MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine's Comparative Medicine and Integrative Biology Graduate Program.
4. **Admission and start date:** Anticipated start date expected in spring, summer, or fall 2026 (start date is flexible for the right candidate).