

# Animal Science

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## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

### Top Marks for Animal Science in National Student Survey



Old College, Aberystwyth University

The National Student Survey (NSS), now in its fourth year, is a poll of recent graduates conducted across the UK and commissioned by the Higher Education funding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Aberystwyth University has always enjoyed high ratings for student satisfaction in the NSS, and the 2008 results for the University are better than ever. Furthermore, in the part of the survey that includes Animal Science, the courses at Aberystwyth were first for student satisfaction in the UK.

Institute Director Professor Wayne Powell commented on the results, "This survey serves to confirm what our students already tell us about our teaching. The commitment and expertise of staff, the excellent resources such as farms, laboratories and the wonderful Aberystwyth environment, all combine to make IBERS an obvious first choice". As Professor Will Haresign, Director of Learning and Teaching observed, "These results reflect the hard work that goes on within the Institute in listening to students about their needs and working hard to ensure they get the best educational experience that we can give them".

### Scholarship Successes

**Animal Science student, Katie Tavener, has been awarded a scholarship from the Monmouthshire Farm Endowment Trust Fund worth £1000.** Many congratulations to her. Also, third year Animal Science student, Hefin Jones, was successful in winning the Welsh Livery Trust scholarship. He used this money along with other grants he won to fly to Niigata and then Osaka, both in Japan, to undertake his dissertation, an investigation of factors affecting the growth of the Japanese Koi.

## IBERS ABERYSTWYTH

Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

### List of Courses

Animal Science  
Animal Behaviour  
Agriculture with Animal Science  
Equine and Human Sports Science  
Equine Science  
Marine and Freshwater Biology  
Zoology  
Zoology and Microbiology

#### Interested?

Phone **Fay Hollick** on **01970 624471**  
Email: **ffh@aber.ac.uk**

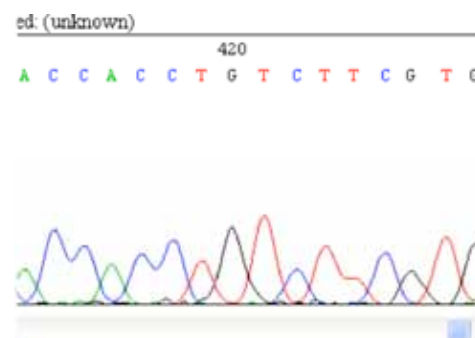
### What bugs does Bugs have?

**The stereotypical image of a rabbit is often that of Bugs Bunny chewing a carrot.** However, the reality is that although rabbits eat plants, we actually know relatively little about the precise method of breaking down the ingested food. As with other herbivores, it is known that rabbits rely on the presence of microbes in their digestive tract to help break down the ingested food. This newly broken down food is then excreted in the form of soft faeces which the rabbit then re-ingests. To date microbial degradation of food in the digestive tract has been studied in many herbivores, but at present there is relatively little known about the microbial

species found in the rabbit's digestive tract that carry out this process. As part of their undergraduate dissertation Animal Science students are trying to determine the diversity of microbes found in the soft faeces of rabbits, and by inference their hindgut. They are doing this by growing bacteria isolated from soft faeces on agar plates and then studying the relationship of a specific gene in these isolates relative to that seen in other bacteria. By learning more about these DNA sequences we should soon know what types of bugs inhabit the digestive tract of the rabbit.



The rabbits that donated the soft faeces



A chromatogram DNA sequence from the bugs in the rabbits guts

## Bovine Tuberculosis and Global Warming

**Hefin Williams, a graduate of IBERS, is currently in the second year of his PhD studies looking at the role of climate change on bovine tuberculosis (BTB).** For many years the



incidence of BTB has been increasing on dairy farms in the south west of England, and more recently also in south west Wales. With global warming, as winters become milder on average, the BTB bacteria may be more able to survive on pastures, making the BTB problem more widely distributed. In addition to his PhD studies, Hefin is a man of many parts. He is a weekend farmer on a local upland sheep and suckler beef farm, and he also lectures in countryside management in Welsh.

## IBERS Puts the Boot in for Children in Need

**Staff and students once again clashed at the annual welly football match to raise money for Children in Need.**

Held in the indoor equine arena, players had to wear Wellington boots. In order to handicap the able, goal scorers had their legs tied together to slow them down a bit for the rest of the game. The students won the 'Welly Cup' for the second year in a



*Both teams after the match*

row, a triumph of youth over maturity! Institute Director, Professor Wayne Powell, who played and scored in the match (pictured at the front in the middle) commented, "This was great fun and shows the close working relationship between staff and students. IBERS is proud to support such a worthy cause as Children in Need". A total of £125 was raised.

## Lluest Equine Centre Busy and Successful as Ever



*The Lluest Equine Centre*

**The Lluest Equine Centre has continued to run a busy schedule of show jumping and dressage competitions over the winter, mostly organised by interested students.** Lluest has also been the venue for the Welsh Para Winter Dressage Training and Championship, which was won by Paula Clark riding Spock, one of the University's horses, and the runner-up was Amanda Say riding Seamus, another University horse. In addition to these events, there have been a series of training events, including sessions by Spenser Wilton, Jan Goldsmith and Patrick Print, chair of the BHS. It is great to have such well known experienced trainers regularly using Lluest and it is great that they are all so keen to get interested students involved.

## University Farm Food Wins Award



*Huw McConochie (right) receiving the True Taste Wales Food and Drink Award*

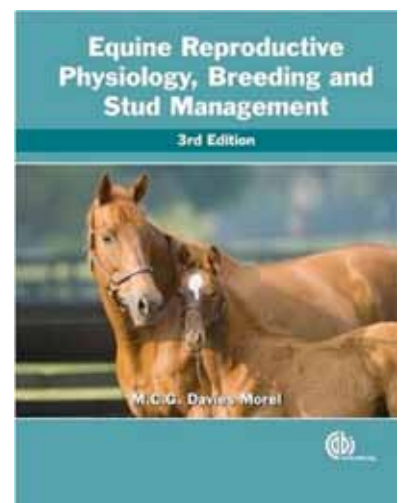
**The Institute's farms are increasingly becoming the source of food offered to students, staff, visitors and the general public in the University's Hospitality Services.** On a weekly basis, beef from the Institute's farms has been prepared locally before being served by the University's chefs on campus to much demand and popular acclaim. Most recently, food from the University Farms has been awarded first prize in the 2008/9 True Taste Wales Food and Drink Awards. Dr Huw McConochie, University Farms Manager and former Aberystwyth Animal Science undergraduate explained "Providing food to the University has allowed us to begin the process of getting closer to our consumers, significantly reducing food miles and providing customers at the University's restaurants with a high quality mean of local provenance. This award has confirmed that the food that we produce is of the highest quality."

## New Edition of Text

**The third edition of Dr Mina Davies-Morel's popular text book "Equine Reproductive Physiology, Breeding and Stud Management", has just been published.**

Dr Davies Morel teaches reproductive physiology to all Animal Science students and equine stud management to third year Animal Science students on the equine pathway of the course.

The new edition of her book covers the anatomy and physiology of the mare and the stallion; it goes on to study how this knowledge can be applied to the successful breeding of horses, maximizing both productivity and animal welfare.



*The front cover of Dr Davies-Morel's new book*