

GRADUATE AG RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



Drew Lugar

"My research is immediately applicable to industry. Publishing and Extension are means to get research results directly to the producers who can use them."

Drew Lugar, PhD student, Animal Sciences

THE STUDENT: Although Drew Lugar's family wasn't directly involved in agriculture, he worked both in a veterinary clinic and as a hired hand for local cattle farmers near his hometown of Cherokee, Iowa. He went to Iowa State University intending to pursue veterinary medicine. The animal science curriculum sparked his interest in swine and prompted him to look at graduate school instead. He earned a master's degree at Virginia Tech, where he co-managed the swine research facility, did his own applied research, and taught undergraduates in the classroom and lab. Lugar's combination of skills led him into industry, working on commercial production sites for a swine research company. But he discovered he missed teaching. "A friend who knew I was thinking about getting a Ph.D. met [Purdue Assistant Professor of Animal Sciences] Kara Stewart at a conference, called me the next day and said, 'Hey, you need to talk to her.' It was a chance opportunity," Lugar says. "She was doing the research that I was passionate about, and she was also into teaching." He arrived at Purdue in June 2015 to study swine reproductive management under Stewart's guidance.

THE RESEARCH: Lugar's research focuses on the male side of swine reproduction, both stressors and reproductive physiology. In one study, for example, he is assessing the effects of heat stress on boars' reproductive performance and the mitigating effects of different dietary supplements to improve

reproductive performance. Another study focuses on the major effect of in utero heat stress on the offspring's future performance. The pragmatic nature of his work appeals to Lugar: "Once my research is published, producers can make adjustments immediately to improve their efficiency," he says.

MAKING THE MOST OF EXTENSION: Lugar's research has been the basis for press releases and educational videos that provide practical support to large and small-scale producers. He also has been involved in teaching 4-H members and other youth about livestock production. He received the 2017 Graduate Student Award from the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Specialists Association.

TEACHER AT HEART: Lugar has enjoyed the many teaching opportunities that came his way at Purdue. After working with his advisor in the Domestic Animal Reproduction labs last semester, he's now responsible for them. "Being able to work with undergraduates and helping develop them as future scientists is gratifying," he says. "Keeping them excited about learning is key to being a good educator." Lugar, who will complete his degree in August, hopes to apply that philosophy in a faculty position with a strong teaching component. In his spare time, he likes to rock climb, lift weights and spend time with his wife, a personal trainer, and their two mutts, Jasper and Remi.