

COE STUDENT UPDATE – ALEX HOHENSTEIN

Alex Hohenstein was a student at University of Wisconsin – River Falls (UWRF) when he learned about the COE program. Alex had been involved with poultry through 4-H and FFA and had a desire to learn more about the poultry industry and career options, so he applied to the COE program. He participated in COE in 2013 and completed his internship with Jennie-O Turkey Store (JOTS). He graduated from UWRF with a degree in Animal Science. After graduation he took a job working at Rembrandt Foods. He worked in flock management for the Specialty Egg Division, a job he had for 3 years before returning to JOTS.

“A COE classmate of mine, Jed Ryan, told me about an opportunity with Jennie-O Turkey Store that would allow me to move to southeast Minnesota where my wife is from. I had gained a lot of knowledge while working at Rembrandt that helped make the transition to turkey breeders, but I definitely found it more challenging working with turkeys!” Alex said he dug out his COE binder when applying to JOTS to brush-up on a few things before his interview. He and Jed now work in JOTS’ breeder division together.

Alex is currently the Breeder Production Manager in Dodge Center, MN. In this role, he oversees the annual production of over 14 million hatching eggs. “When people ask me what I do for work, I usually first have to explain that Jennie-O Turkey Store is not an actual store. Then I can tell them how I manage the farms where the birds produce eggs that go to the hatchery. The birds from those eggs go to the commercial farms for meat.”

Alex still uses COE information to help teach others about poultry production. “One example I find myself bringing-up from COE is the egg yolk dyeing experiment we did showing how the yolk is deposited in layers during egg formation. I use that example to explain follicular development to employees while performing necropsies.”

During his time at JOTS Alex has served as an internship mentor to other COE students, as well as a speaker during Wednesday night forums. He advises anyone going into animal agriculture to keep a good work/life balance. “Given the demanding nature of animal agriculture, it can be easy to get caught up in a never-ending cycle of being consumed by work,” Alex says. He advises students to find time to disconnect, recharge, and spend time with family and friends. For Alex, this means spending quality time with his wife Molly and their children Jovi and Jaima. Alex also enjoys real estate investing, woodworking, and making and selling custom home goods.

