

FOR THE LOVE OF LIVESTOCK

SONOMA FFA ALUMNUS DISCOVERED POSSESSING A PASSION FOR ANIMALS AND A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN WAS THE KEY TO GAINING NEW EXPERIENCES. — By Jodi Helmer

Although Casey Spencer started showing pigs and cattle in middle school and had odd jobs working on farms, he never thought about pursuing a career in agriculture. He changed his mind after his Sonoma FFA advisor took him to a California state FFA convention as a high school freshman. “My mind was blown,” Spencer says. “There were so many people who were so passionate about agriculture, and there was so much out there to do in agriculture.”

The experience encouraged Spencer to pursue diverse opportunities to see what piqued his interest. In 2020, he used the knowledge and skills gained while working for a draft horse operation to start Spencer Farrier Services. Running his own business helped Spencer connect with ranchers, which led to additional opportunities — including a job working for a beef cattle operation.

“I just put my head down and picked up work where I could,” he says. “Even if it was something I wasn’t 100% into, I gave it a shot and a lot of times it turned out to be a great experience.”

The combination of loving livestock, having a positive attitude and being willing to try new things also changed the trajectory of Spencer’s future.

A NEW CHAPTER

Instead of going to a local junior college, Spencer’s advisor pushed



Attending a California FFA State convention led Casey Spencer to explore career avenues and find his niche in livestock production.

him to consider a different path. He applied to and was accepted into the University of Wyoming, where he’s majoring in agricultural business and farm and ranch management.

During his sophomore year, Spencer joined the university’s meat judging team and has since traveled around the United States and Australia to compete.

“Casey was one of the top performers from the get-go,” says McKensie Phillips, coordinator of the meat judging team at the University of Wyoming. “Among his teammates, Casey is the one who genuinely enjoys the process of learning how to evaluate meat products and challenges himself to reach expert level.”

In Australia, Spencer’s skills also caught the attention of local ag industry professionals. He received

offers to work on cattle ranches and with an international beef distributor.

Spencer, who earned his American FFA Degree this past November, is committed to finishing college, but he plans to keep his options open after he graduates in 2025.

“My advisors have done so much to build my confidence and encourage me to see where [agriculture] can take me,” he says. “It’s been good for me to get out and explore different parts of the country and to try new things and have a lot of experiences.”

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