

Dr. Eric Triplett  
Chair, Search and Screen Committee  
Microbiology and Cell Science Department  
University of Florida – IFAS  
Gainesville, FL 32611

November 13, 2025

Dear Dr. Triplett and Search Committee,

I was honored and humbled by the invitation to apply for the Chair position in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida. After carefully and prayerfully considering this position and discussing it with my family, as well as faculty and administrators at the University of Florida, I would like to submit my application. I am including my CV and a list of three professional references for use by the search committee. There is a moment of nostalgia anytime an invitation comes along to return to one's academic roots; however, as that moment wanes a tremendous sense of responsibility follows. The opportunity to positively influence an institution that had such a profound impact on your professional development carries with it a significant obligation and along with it a sense that failure can never be an option. Growing up on a commercial beef cattle operation in southwest Florida, I was introduced at an early age to the economic importance of animal agriculture in the state. In my recent visits to southwest Florida, I have noticed that one of the most significant impacts on animal agriculture is the expansion of communities into areas that were once considered prime agricultural real estate. So, in addition to enhanced efficiency of animal production (one of the long-standing goals of the land grant university system), new challenges are emerging that must be included in the research, teaching and Extension responsibilities of land grant universities like the University of Florida. Competition for resources between animal agriculture and expanding communities; shrinking the footprint of animal agriculture through improved management practices; ensuring long-term food security; and sustainable production practices that reduce the climatic impact of animal agriculture while providing producers with the tools necessary to remain profitable are just a few of the emerging grand challenges for The University of Florida's Department of Animal Sciences and our allied industries. Addressing these challenges will require diverse expertise and thinking brought together in cross-missional, multidiscipline teams. The opportunity to provide leadership and influence these efforts is a major draw for me to the Chair position in the UF-IFAS Department of Animal Sciences.

Since earning my Ph.D. in meat science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I was fortunate to serve almost 30 years on the faculty at the University of Georgia. I served in the role of Undergraduate Coordinator from 2003 to 2010 during which time I was charged with leading an extensive renovation of the Animal and Dairy Science curriculum. This allowed me to practice my leadership skills in a faculty-driven process that consumed a great deal of time and energy. The end product was a challenging curriculum that offered tremendous flexibility to our students so that they could personalize their educational experience to meet their individual needs. My formal teaching responsibilities have included general Animal Science courses as well as those specific to my discipline of meat science, including a Freshmen seminar entitled "The All-American Hotdog". Additionally, I have had the pleasure of interacting with graduate students in the Poultry Science, Food Science, Entomology and Animal Science departments through my graduate courses and my service on graduate committees. Beyond the classroom, I have had the pleasure of working with faculty in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication department to conduct research into the value of student engagement and experiential

learning in the maturation of our students into life-long learners. As you may have already realized, teaching is a passion for me and the interaction with students at the undergraduate and graduate levels has been a significant source of the joy that I gleaned from my time at the University of Georgia.

While at UGA I also developed what I consider to be, an applied research program in meat science. This gave me the opportunity to work with outstanding graduate students, as well as faculty from several on-campus departments (Food Science, Poultry Science, Entomology), the Animal Science Department at Fort Valley State University, and the USDA Russell Research Center in Athens, GA. This work afforded me the opportunity to forge relationships with animal industry leaders as we worked together to answer pertinent industry questions. Although most of my research emphasis has been in the applied area, much of my early research efforts tended towards a basic understanding of cellular mechanisms of muscle growth and meat tenderness in beef cattle, including collaboration with University of Florida meat scientists focused on improving meat quality attributes of Brahman and Brahman-influenced cattle. Later in my career, I focused on improving feed efficiency in beef cattle. This began by selecting Angus cattle into divergent groups for feed efficiency and evolved into a team effort to identify biological differences between the lines. I served as a co-PI on two USDA-NIFA grants and PI on a large industry grant focused on the relationship between the gastrointestinal microbiome of cattle and feed efficiency. In today's university, I believe that we need a balanced approach in our research programs that includes efforts to increase our understanding of the basic biology and biochemistry of animal systems combined with efforts to employ our findings in commercial animal agriculture production.

Throughout my career, extension and outreach have been important aspects of my efforts. Although I never had an extension appointment, I was a contributor to producer outreach programs in GA and around the country. I have presented numerous extension programs on a variety of topics including the following: National Beef Quality Audits, National Market Cow and Bull Beef Quality Audits, Beef Value Cuts, Pork Quality and Carcass Value, Beef Carcass Value Determinants, Cull Cow Marketing, Applications of Ultrasound, and others. I have also coordinated the national PORK 101 program, including a curriculum revision, and have a continuing relationship with the US Meat Export Federation focused on promoting US beef, pork, and lamb products to purveyors in the Caribbean and Mexico. My appreciation for Extension and outreach comes from two main factors. First, outreach fits with my passion for teaching, since its goal is producer education and secondly much of my research effort has been directed at improving producer profitability.

In 2023, I made a career move into administration, becoming Director of the North Florida Research and Education Center with locations in Quincy, Marianna, and Live Oak. NFREC is one of the largest and most diverse REC's in the UF-IFAS system with approximately 20 faculty, 60 staff and 25 graduate students and a budget of \$8.1M. The Center faculty represent nine academic departments with programs in beef cattle nutrition and reproduction, soil health, forages, row crops, vegetables, citrus, forestry, and wildlife. During my time at NFREC, we hired six faculty, reorganized our farm operations in Quincy, rejuvenated our Advisory Councils in Quincy and Marianna, developed a regional graduate student poster competition, and procured a \$2M Legislative Budget Request for renovations in Marianna. These successes have come through teamwork that includes faculty, staff, graduate students, IFAS Leadership and strong stakeholder support. Moving forward we will conduct a Strategic Planning session in early 2026 and seek support for an infrastructure expansion project in Live Oak.

In the way of leadership philosophy, I have always attempted to lead by example and to lead through service. Over the past 8 years, I have been part of multiple leadership development programs, including LEAD21, LEAD IFAS and the Institute for Academic Leadership. These experiences have helped me to better understand my strengths and identify opportunities to improve my leadership skills. They have also allowed me to form relationships with other leaders that will be invaluable sounding boards and resources to help me continue to grow. In 2019, I was afforded the opportunity to apply my leadership skills on the Executive Committee of the American Meat Science Association (AMSA), a 3-year term that included serving as the 2020-21 President for the organization. AMSA functions through a leadership team to represent about 2300 academic and industry professionals and 900 students with a nearly \$5-million annual budget. During my service on the Executive Committee, we developed and implemented a strategic plan, began a \$5 million fundraising campaign, transitioned an international scientific meeting from Disney properties to zoom and then back to face-to-face the following year, all the while growing our membership and budget. I am an advocate of leadership teams as they minimize the opportunity to make leadership decisions in a vacuum and increase engagement within the team. Leadership teams also serve to develop leadership potential in others and provide continuity in times of change. The NFREC Leadership Team was created in 2024 and includes senior faculty from the three locations with biweekly discussions of Center-related issues. I would propose developing a similar team approach to leadership across the missions within the Department of Animal Science so that multiple perspectives can be discussed and informed decisions can be made.

A successful future for the Department of Animal Science will require recruiting, nurturing, and retaining high quality faculty and staff, something I want to be involved with and something for which I believe I am well suited. I enjoy helping people succeed and one of the intriguing aspects of the Chair's job would be the opportunity to help faculty and staff reach their full potential and enjoy satisfaction in their jobs. Another priority for the department would be fostering cross-missional appreciation amongst the faculty and multidiscipline team development. Building "esprit de corps" amongst the faculty will positively affect faculty-faculty, faculty-staff, and faculty-student interactions within the department. I would also propose a comprehensive evaluation of the undergraduate and graduate curriculums and development of strategic initiatives that direct future decisions related to the department's research, teaching and Extension programming. The final step to success for the department would be revitalizing stakeholder relationships by listening, being present, and incorporating their input into decision making.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Chair's position in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida and I look forward to learning more about the department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Dean Pringle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

T. Dean Pringle  
Professor and Director,  
North Florida Research and Education Center  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences  
The University of Florida