

Internet Courses and Computer Interactive Modules

Advantages of Using the Internet as an Instructional Tool in a Meat Science Course.

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Internet access is now commonplace at Universities across the United States. Modem and computer speeds have greatly increased making Internet-assisted courses a valuable means of communicating instructional materials to students. The meat science course homepage at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University was developed not as a sole source, distance learning site, but rather to aid in on-campus instruction.

The meat science homepage contains the name of the instructors and teaching assistants along with other contact information, including e-mail links. In addition, the meat science homepage has a list of hot-buttons that provide links to the 1) course description, 2) syllabus, 3) lecture materials, 4) laboratory materials, 5) special updates, 6) problem sets, 7) quiz and exam keys, and 8) class grades. The material is either in HTML format or as "pdf" files. HTML files do not require a special program to access them. The "pdf" files require Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is a free downloadable program.

One advantage of utilizing the Internet to assist teaching students in meat science is the ability to provide the students with greater access to photographs, colored graphics, and animated material compared to in-class instruction alone. With access to digital cameras, the VPI&SU meat science Internet site has a comprehensive library of beef, pork, and lamb retail cuts along with some variety meats. The students have access to the laboratory handouts in advance of the laboratory that also include study questions. Cumulative grades are posted so the students can check their performance in the course as the semester progresses. The meat science Internet site is not a substitute to in-class participation, but is a very effective means of facilitating teaching and as an additional communication tool.

Student "Interactive Modules" for Livestock and Meat Evaluation.

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Livestock and Meat Evaluation (ASI 315) is taught both fall and spring semesters at Kansas state University. Approximately 60% of the course involves market animal and carcass evaluation and pricing. Pricing includes determinations of "break-even" prices for feeder animals. The remaining 40% of the course involves "keep-cull" breeding animal evaluation that incorporates visual appraisal and performance data. Beef yield grading and pricing of feeder animals, market animals, and carcasses are challenging for students. Therefore, a Web site was developed for this course that includes five student "interactive modules". The beef yield grading, livestock and meat pricing, and performance modules are structured as multiple choice problems. When a student answers a problem incorrectly, some suggestions are offered as possible reasons for missing the problem. When a student answers a question correctly, they can advance to another problem. The beef yield grading module also has a "tutorial" portion that explains and reviews yield grading. The break-even feeder animal pricing module, and a second pricing module are structured in visual basic format where the student has to type in the answer rather than click on a multiple choice selection. If an answer is incorrect, the module reviews the basic procedure for working the problem and allows the student to try again. When an answer is correct, the student can proceed to another problem. Students can navigate to any portion of any module at any time. Students have reported that the "interactive module" is very helpful. The Web site for this "interactive module" is: www.oznet.ksu.edu/ed_asi315.

Teaching ANSC 307 (meats) at Texas A&M University Using Internet Resources

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ANSC 307 is the introductory meat science course at Texas A&M University. Majors in Animal Science, Food Science and Technology, and Nutrition are the principal students in the class with other agriculture majors taking the class as an elective. A variety of Internet resources are used in the class. A web page was created (<http://meat.tamu.edu/ANSC307home.html>) to provide information including the course syllabus and related industry, university, and government links. For the honors section of the class, each lecture was converted to a web page, which is projected in the classroom through the use of an Ethernet connection, a notebook computer with a web browser, and a video projection system. The students can download lectures at their convenience to assist in taking notes. For all sections of the course, web pages have been created to demonstrate anatomy and other areas where technical and scientific information needs to be communicated. Pictures of the students are taken with a digital camera so that web pages with the names and pictures of the students can be used by the instructors to learn the students' names. The Texas A&M Student Messaging System is used to allow students to check their grades through the Internet in a secure environment. Most recently, a listserv has been added to allow students and instructors to communicate outside the classroom. This feature is used frequently immediately before exams to allow students to post questions and to receive answers while studying at home. Each student benefits from this since all students receive the questions and answers. The Internet has truly enhanced teaching introductory meat science by providing opportunities for students to learn about relevant topics and to stay in touch with instructors using the latest information technology.