

The Aubieclave Report



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE



THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Rachel Neto

Dr. Rachel Neto, Associate Clinical Professor, has been a valued member of the Department of Pathobiology for nearly seven years. Originally from Ladário, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, Dr. Neto brings both expertise and a strong sense of community to her role. She describes the people at Auburn as what she

enjoys most—highlighting the support, inspiration, and sense of belonging she feels among colleagues and staff. Her appreciation for positive, collaborative environments is reflected in her own contributions, as she consistently fosters a culture of curiosity, resilience, and compassion within the department.

As Residency Program Director and instructor, Dr. Neto plays a key role in shaping the next generation of veterinary pathologists. Her work involves not only teaching complex concepts in pathology but also thoughtfully designing learning materials, engaging teaching approaches, and meaningful assessments. She finds great fulfillment in contributing to the growth and development of her students and residents, noting that teaching is both rewarding and a continuous learning experience. Outside of her professional work, Dr. Neto has a creative side—she enjoys reading and writing poetry in Portuguese and hopes to one day publish a collection of her work, reflecting her lifelong passion for literature and philosophical exploration.



THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Pankaj Gaonkar

Dr. Pankaj Prakash Gaonkar, Avian Pathology Resident, has been at Auburn for almost six years and brings a global perspective from his hometown of Ratnagiri, India. He values the department's collaborative environment, where diverse experiences support both professional and personal growth.

In his role, Dr. Gaonkar works closely with the Alabama Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, contributing to efforts that support poultry health across the state. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, it plays a critical role in helping veterinarians and producers make informed decisions. His training also provides valuable opportunities to engage in fieldwork, connecting laboratory findings with real-world challenges in poultry health. Outside of his professional work, Dr. Gaonkar earned his Karate black belt and successfully defended his PhD in the same month—a testament to his dedication and discipline—and enjoys experimenting in the kitchen, particularly with chicken dishes, even if perfecting a repeat recipe remains an ongoing challenge.

THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Jen Stewart

Jen Stewart joined the Department of Pathobiology in August 2025 as part of the administrative support team, bringing with her a decade of experience managing and growing a litigation support firm, offering skills that support her numerous contributions within the department.



Jen is passionate about building meaningful relationships and creating collaborative, efficient work environments. Known for her professionalism, attention to detail, and heart for service, she values integrity, faith, and community in both her personal and professional life. Outside of work, Jen is a proud mother of four and “Darlin” to four grandchildren—Cennedy, Ridge, Bear, and Rome. She enjoys refinishing furniture, spending time with family and friends, and leading women’s small groups that foster connection and thoughtful conversation. A creative at heart, Jen even had one of her poems published in the *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans* during middle school—an early reflection of her expressive and thoughtful spirit.

A large, semi-transparent image of the Auburn University mascot, a tiger, wearing a blue jersey with the number 01 and the word 'AUBURN' on it. The tiger is surrounded by a crowd of people, some of whom are reaching out to touch its hands.

Welcome to The Jungle!



Dr. Alyona Michael

NEW NECROPSY SECTION HEAD

We are excited to share that, beginning May 1, 2026, Dr. Alyona Michael stepped into the role of Necropsy Section Head. This transition comes at a time of continued growth, innovation, and rising demand within our Necropsy program. Dr. Michael brings a strong commitment to academic excellence, collaborative leadership, and student-centered service. We are confident that under her guidance, the program will continue to thrive, expand its capabilities, and further strengthen the educational experience we provide to our students.

We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Kellye Joiner for her outstanding leadership and foundational contributions in shaping the Necropsy program into what it is today. Her dedication, vision, and tireless efforts have built a strong and enduring framework that has benefited both students and faculty. Dr. Joiner's work has set a high standard of excellence, and we will do our very best to honor, preserve, and continue the legacy she has established.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Michael on her new role and in thanking Dr. Joiner for her remarkable service and lasting impact.

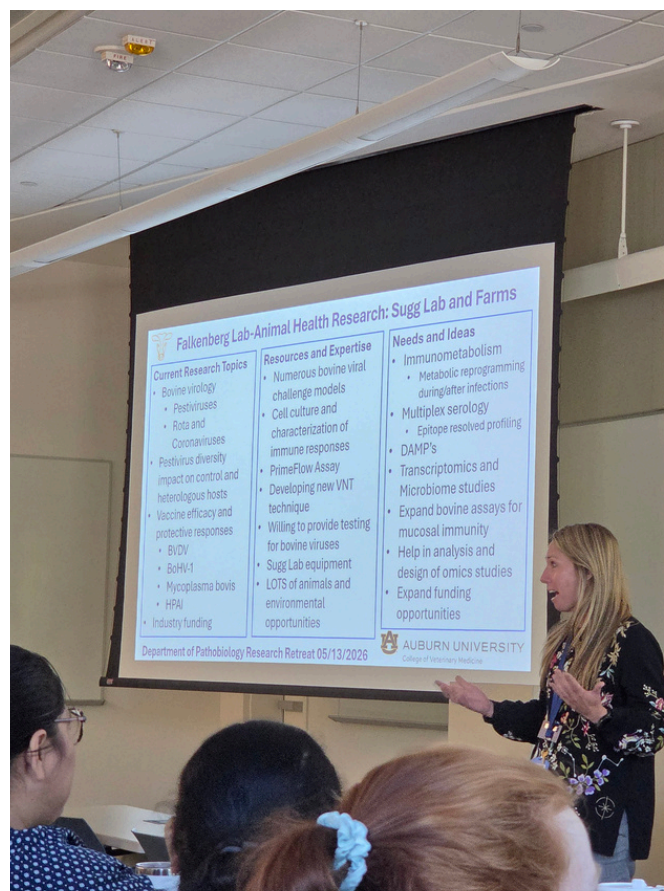


Pathobiology Hosts Successful Research Retreat

The Department of Pathobiology came together on May 13 for a highly successful **Research Retreat** at CASIC, bringing faculty, staff, and trainees into one space to share ideas and strengthen collaboration. Despite the short planning timeline, the retreat came together seamlessly thanks to the efforts of several contributors. Special thanks are extended to Drs. Constantinos Kyriakis, Xu Wang, Laura Huber, Yoonsung Hu, and Dimitrios Sakkas, as well as Mrs. Jen Stewart and the rest of the Admin Team, for their invaluable support in organizing and facilitating the event.

The retreat featured a dynamic two-hour session where participants delivered brief, focused presentations highlighting their ongoing research, available resources, and future needs. Designed to spark collaboration, these short talks encouraged meaningful discussion and new connections across the department. Following lunch, attendees participated in breakout sessions tailored for faculty and trainees, with faculty exploring potential collaborative projects and trainees discussing career pathways in academia and beyond. The event reinforced Pathobiology's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and mentorship at every level!

Thank you for coming to this retreat-- we can't wait to plan the next one!



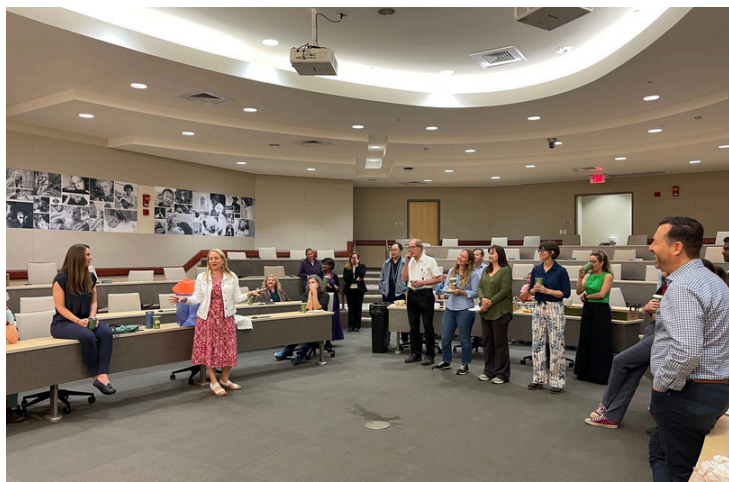


Pathobiology Faculty and Students Participate in 2026 SEVPAC Meeting

Faculty and students from the Department of Pathobiology recently participated in the 52nd Annual **Southeastern Veterinary Pathology Conference (SEVPAC)**, held May 15–16, 2026, in Tifton, Georgia. This long-standing conference brings together veterinary pathologists and trainees from institutions across the region to share diagnostic cases, exchange expertise, and foster collaboration within the discipline.

The 2026 meeting focused on ocular pathology and featured a guest lecture by Dr. Dodd Sledge of the University of Tennessee, along with a fast-paced program of case presentations contributed by attendees. Participation in SEVPAC provides a valuable opportunity for Pathobiology faculty and students to engage with peers, enhance diagnostic skills, and showcase their work on a regional stage.





Dr. Steury's Farewell Celebration

The Department of Pathobiology recently gathered to celebrate Dr. Steury and recognize her exceptional contributions, dedication, and lasting impact on the College of Veterinary Medicine. Colleagues, staff, and friends came together in Newsom Auditorium to reflect on her time with the department and to express their sincere appreciation for the many ways she has supported and strengthened the Pathobiology community.

Throughout her time at Auburn, Dr. Steury has been a dedicated advocate for the Public and One Health program, working to advance collaboration across disciplines and emphasize the critical connections between human, animal, and environmental health. Her commitment to these efforts, along with her support of students, trainees, and colleagues, has left a meaningful and lasting impression on the department. As she begins an exciting new chapter, we extend our heartfelt thanks and best wishes—she will be greatly missed, and her impact will continue to be felt for years to come.





Pathobiology Represented at SCOP Meeting

Dr. Rachel Neto, along with three anatomic pathology residents and three ophthalmology residents, represented Auburn University at this year's **Society for Comparative Ocular Pathology (SCOP)** meeting held at Cornell University. Dr. Neto attended in person, while the residents participated virtually, ensuring strong representation from the department across formats.

Together, the group presented clinicopathologic cases that highlighted both the depth of their expertise and the strength of collaboration between pathology and ophthalmology trainees. Their participation reflects the team's shared enthusiasm for ophthalmic pathology and reinforces Pathobiology's continued commitment to interdisciplinary training and scholarly engagement.



Dr. Murphy Passes ACVP Phase I Exam

Please join us in congratulating our second-year clinical pathology resident, Dr. Bridgette Murphy, on successfully passing the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP) Phase I general examination. This milestone marks an important step in her journey toward becoming a board-certified clinical pathologist.

This achievement reflects Dr. Murphy's hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence in clinical pathology. We are incredibly proud of her accomplishment and look forward to all she will continue to achieve.



Thank You for Supporting the Towel Drive

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Staff Advisory Committee's towel drive in support of the Big House Foundation! Your generosity helps make a meaningful difference in the lives of children served by Big House.

Each spring, Big House provides every child with a uniquely embroidered beach towel and a new swimsuit. These personalized towels—featuring each child's name—are more than just summer essentials; for many children, they may be the first or only item they've ever had that is uniquely theirs. Your donations help create these special moments and lasting memories, and we are so grateful for your support!



Rookes Connects Passion to Purpose

Senior Sydney Rookes found an academic home within the CVM's **Public and One Health** undergraduate major for a simple reason.

"When I started at Auburn, there was no major that combined my interests in human, animal, and environmental health," said Rookes, who will serve as the program's first graduation marshal at commencement. "In my sophomore year, the Public and One Health major was started, and I instantly knew it was where I was meant to be."

In the fall, she will begin the pursuit of a Juris Doctorate at Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law with the goal of eventually practicing in the field of public health and food systems law.



Celebrating Faculty Achievement

The CVM recognized 26 faculty members during its **Faculty Promotion & Tenure Reception** at Ag Heritage Park Pavilion. During the event, the college celebrated 15 faculty members who earned tenure and/or promotion during the academic year.

Within the Pathobiology Department, we celebrated the promotions of **Dr. Nickolas M. DeLuca**, **Dr. Sanjeev K. Narayanan**, **Dr. Deepti Pillai**, and **Dr. Satoshi Suzuki**.



DVM Cohorts Help Highlight Faculty Excellence

During May's General Faculty Meeting, two Pathobiology faculty members earned Faculty Recognition Awards for outstanding contributions and positive impacts on the education of students in each of the college's DVM programs. The award winners were selected by each DVM cohort:

Class of 2029: Dr. Jeba Jesudoss Chelladurai, Assistant Professor, Department of Pathobiology

Class of 2028: Dr. Jordan Towns, Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Pathobiology



Dr. Janet Donlin Addressed CVM Graduating Class

In addressing the CVM's 130-member graduating class at Neville Arena, American Veterinary Medical Association CEO and Executive Vice President Janet Donlin praised the newly minted DVMs for dedicating themselves to service.

"We in the veterinary community, each member of the veterinary healthcare team, dedicates our lives and work to service," she said.

Donlin said the professional journey ahead will involve discovery, a sense of purpose, and happiness that comes through "selflessly helping others."

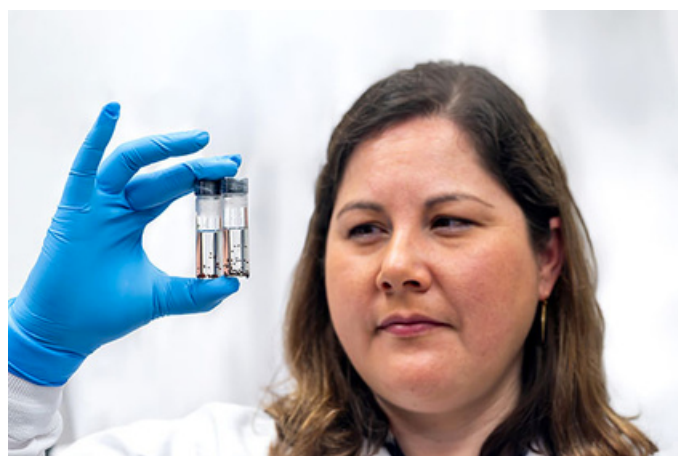
Often, that service involves building and preserving trust with the people who accompany patients. "We must remember that we spend much of our time talking to the two-legged attached to the four-legged animals."



New Fellowship Initiative Includes PAOH Student

Public and One Health major Chris Khalaf (pictured third from the left) is among Auburn University's inaugural cohort of Foundation Fellows. As part of its campuswide commemoration of the nation's 250th anniversary, AU selected six faculty members and 22 students from across the university to participate in the new interdisciplinary initiative exploring the ideas, institutions and debates that have shaped American democracy.

Khalaf, a senior from Vestavia Hills, plans to eventually earn a law degree and apply his skills at the intersection of public health, food access and public policy.



Forecasting a Persistent Parasitic Threat

Ticks are the approximate size of a sesame seed, but Big Data suggests that they pose a gargantuan year-round threat to pets and people alike. As lead author of the Companion Animal Parasite Council’s Pet Parasite Forecast, **Dr. Kathryn Reif** and colleagues drew on a vast assortment of data to project where pets will be at the highest risk for vector-borne diseases transmitted by ticks, fleas, mosquitoes, and other pests.

Reif, the college’s Bailey-Goodwin Endowed associate professor of parasitology and a CAPC board member, said a warming climate, deforestation, and ever-changing interactions between animals and humans have contributed to a “perfect storm” allowing pathogen-transmitting arthropods to expand their threat areas.

Read more about her work here:

[**aub.ie/ReifTICKS**](http://aub.ie/ReifTICKS)



From CDC to the classroom: Dr. Nickolas DeLuca joins Auburn’s Public and One Health Program

For nearly three decades, **Dr. Nickolas DeLuca** helped the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the front lines in its battles against such foes as HIV, tuberculosis, Zika, and mpox. As a lecturer in the college’s Public and One Health undergraduate program, he is helping Auburn students understand the value of service.

Knowing the impact it has made on him, DeLuca puts a strong emphasis on experiential learning. In his classroom, students volunteer at local community organizations addressing public health needs. The course underscores the multidisciplinary nature of public and one health, showing students how policy, communication, science, and community engagement intersect.

Read more about his work here:

[**aub.ie/DeLucaPAOH**](http://aub.ie/DeLucaPAOH)



Launching the 2026 CVM Summer Scholars Program

The College of Veterinary Medicine officially kicked off its annual Summer Scholars Program on May 11, welcoming 16 DVM students for an engaging and immersive research experience that will run through July 17. Our Pathobiology professors, Drs. **Huber, Horzmann, Gillespie, Sandey, Towns, Pillai, Criado, Reif, Jesudoss Chelladurai,** and **Falkenberg** will be providing hands-on mentorship to these scholars.

Over the course of the program, each student will conduct research in their mentor's laboratory, gaining hands-on experience and insight into scientific investigation. In addition to their lab work, scholars will participate in a variety of enriching program activities, including seminars on scientific research topics, weekly journal clubs, field trips, and student presentations. Together, these experiences will provide a well-rounded introduction to research in veterinary medicine while fostering curiosity, collaboration, and professional growth.



Service Award Recognition: Donna Raiford

Please join us in congratulating Donna Raiford on receiving a Service Award in recognition of her 16 years of dedicated service. Her commitment, reliability, and contributions over the years have made a meaningful impact on the department and the broader veterinary community.

We are grateful for Donna's continued dedication and proud to celebrate this important milestone!



PUBLICATIONS

Alvarez AV, Wooldridge A, Caldwell F, Zetterström S, Menarim BC, **Towns TJ, Graff EC**, Boone L. Clinical and Biochemical Effects of Intra-Articular Autologous Conditioned Serum and Triamcinolone in an Equine Model of Synovitis. *Animals (Basel)*. 2026 Apr 29;16(9):1371. doi: 10.3390/ani16091371. PMID: 42121792; PMCID: PMC13163084.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42121792/>

Barros M, **Pietruska A**, Khalid Z, Gulizia JP, **Hauck R**. Secondary analysis of the intestinal microbiota of healthy chickens. *Poult Sci*. 2026 Apr 13;105(7):106915. doi: 10.1016/j.psj.2026.106915. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42025004; PMCID: PMC13125170.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42025004>

Bauermann FV, Bayles DO, **Falkenberg SM**, Maggioli MF, Ridpath JF. Divergent transcriptomic trajectories in CD4/CD8 β /TcR1 bead-enriched peripheral lymphocyte fraction following experimental infection with low- and high-virulence strains of noncytopathic bovine viral diarrhoea virus type 2. *Virus Res*. 2026 Apr 23;368:199732. doi: 10.1016/j.virusres.2026.199732. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42034289; PMCID: PMC13146538.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42034289>

Brown TC, Banerjee P, Dyce PW, **Falkenberg S**, Rodning SP, Diniz WJS. Network-based multi-omics approaches to identify molecular signatures associated with pregnancy status in beef heifers. *Front Genet*. 2026 Apr 20;17:1794156. doi: 10.3389/fgene.2026.1794156. PMID: 42083569; PMCID: PMC13135839.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42083569>

Durham AE, Gautam SS, **Huber L**. Comparison of *in vitro* degradation of immunoreactive adrenocorticotrophic hormone and insulin in equine blood measured by two immunoassay methods. *Domest Anim Endocrinol*. 2026 May 2;96:107020. doi: 10.1016/j.domaniend.2026.107020. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42097040.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42097040>

Gaonkar PP, Golden R, **Santana-Pereira ALR**, Lambert A, Higgins C, Adhikari Y, Bailey M, Macklin K, **Huber L**. Genomic characterization of avian pathogenic *Escherichia coli* and its potential as a marker organism for antimicrobial resistance. *Appl Environ Microbiol*. 2026 May 4:e0224425. doi: 10.1128/aem.02244-25. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42080571.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42080571>

PUBLICATIONS

Kerby MD, Hlusko KC, **Horzmann KA, Lopes CEB, Raiford D**, Sumner SM. Iodine-treated, fresh tilapia fish skin graft maintains disinfection and structural integrity for 7 days with cold storage. *Am J Vet Res.* 2026 Jan 27;87(5):ajvr.25.08.0298. doi: 10.2460/ajvr.25.08.0298. PMID: 41592448. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41592448>

Mousa MR, Al-Mokaddem AK, **Lopes CEB**, Saucedo-Gonzalez M, Schwartz DW, Yin JH. Acute renal failure in a 4-year-old Angus-cross cow. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2026 May 6:1-3. doi: 10.2460/javma.26.02.0125. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42091085. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42091085>

Sumner SM, **Naskou MC**. Evaluation of multiple freeze-thaw cycles on growth factor and cytokine stability in canine platelet lysate: PDGF, TGF- β , and TNF- α preservation across cycles. *Front Vet Sci.* 2026 Apr 29;13:1817599. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2026.1817599. PMID: 42137777; PMCID: PMC13168162. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42137777>

Publication information is downloaded from PubMed. We recognize that not all publications may be found on that site. Please let Liz Nowling know if your publication did not make the list, and it will be included in the next issue.



Auburn University Employee Pharmacy's Women's Health Offerings

Auburn University's Employee Pharmacy needs your feedback as it considers expansion of women's health offerings. Women 18-and-over employed by Auburn University or women who use AU insurance are encouraged to complete the anonymous 20-minute online survey. Participants will have an opportunity to win gift cards by participating.

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1LKaloOuV59OoaG?



CVM's Summer Exercise Program

Do something good for your body, soul, and spirit by getting involved in the CVM Exercise Program's summer offerings. It's free and open to all CVM faculty, staff, students, and spouses, no matter their fitness levels. **All activities will take place in Bailey 105.**

Please contact our instructor, Jamaricus Rowden (jar0147@auburn.edu) if you have any schedule questions, Dr. Danielle Wadsworth (wadswdd@auburn.edu) with any program suggestions, or Michelle Aono (aonomic@auburn.edu) for anything at all.



Next Faculty Meeting:

Jun. 25 in GH 168 from 1-3 PM

Next Staff Meeting:

Jul. 16 in VEC 246 & 248 from 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

A list of official holidays for Auburn employees, including schedules for 2026, is available on the [University Human Resources website](#).

2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Holiday	Weekday(s) Observed	Date(s) Observed
New Year's Day	Thursday	Jan. 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (2026)	Monday	Jan. 19, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Juneteenth Day	Friday	June 19, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	Sept. 7, 2026
Thanksgiving	Wednesday-Friday	Nov. 25-27, 2026
Christmas*	Friday	Dec. 25, 2026

* In addition to the above dates for Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we will close campus on Friday, Dec. 18, 2026, at 4:45 p.m. and re-open on Monday, Jan. 4, 2027, at 7:45 a.m.

- Friday, Dec. 18, 2026: All offices will remain open and operating until 4:45 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 4, 2027: All offices will re-open and resume operations at 7:45 a.m.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL JUNE BIRTHDAYS!

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|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Awtrey, Alexandra L. | 19-Jun |
| Bastos Lopes, Carlos Eduardo | 13-Jun |
| Butler, Jamie M. | 15-Jun |
| Kellard, Amy R. | 5-Jun |
| Kelley, Hannah M. | 2-Jun |
| Krehling, James T. | 21-Jun |
| Land, Tracey M. | 22-Jun |
| Parsons, Lisa C. | 2-Jun |

