

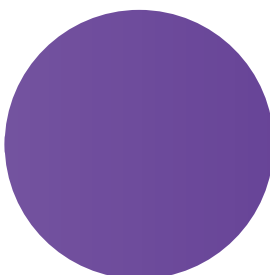
k-state.com/petfoodcollab

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Message from the Chair

Our mission at Pet Food Collab is to bring together industry professionals, researchers and students to share technical knowledge and foster meaningful relationships among the pet food industry, Kansas State University and other research institutions. We designed Pet Food Collab to be small- to medium-scale to prioritize the depth of engagement among attendees through faculty and industry talks, discussion panels, student presentations and numerous opportunities to network and connect.



We welcomed more than 200 participants from sixty-five companies, six universities, four countries and twenty-eight states. From students to CEOs, participants came together to learn, engage and share insights that will support the industry and help students be better prepared to join the workforce. Our vision is for Pet Food Collab to be a dynamic platform for exchanging insights, addressing industry challenges and promoting collaboration in a positive, supportive environment - and we want **you** to be part of it.



In this e-book, we share a snapshot of 2025 Pet Food Collab to introduce the initiative and offer a taste of the experience to all.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to Pet Food Collab 2026. No matter your role or expertise, Pet Food Collab offers a space for everyone!

Warm regards,



Dr. Julia Guazzelli Pezzali

Pet Food Program Director at Kansas State University
Chair of the Pet Food Collab Organizing Committee





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big dreams



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Meet The Team

Pet Food Collab is an initiative led by the Pet Food Program at Kansas State University. We are a team of faculty, alumni and industry professionals driven by a shared passion for advancing the pet food industry.

Julia Guazzelli Pezzali

Kansas State University
*Assistant Professor and
Pet Food Program Director*



Cody Robertson

Kansas State University
Research Assistant



Aleksan Shanoyan

Kansas State University
Professor





Lonnie Hobbs, Jr.

Kansas State University
Assistant Professor



Kathy Gross

Kansas State University
Adjunct Professor



Madison Mackley

Kansas State University
Coordinator of Recruitment



Amanda Dainton

Freshpet
Senior Product Development Scientist



Melissa Weber

Rangen Pet Nutrition
Director of Technical Services



MMMG

Stacy Mayo-Martinez

Martinez Media & Marketing Group
CEO



Edie Lanza

Martinez Media & Marketing Group
Events & Marketing Director



Maria McIntosh

Martinez Media & Marketing Group
Intern



*We gratefully
acknowledge the
MMMG team for
helping us envision
and bring Pet Food
Collab 2025 to life*



This event is made possible through
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PETFOODINDUSTRY



AGENDA OVERVIEW



MONDAY

**STUDENT & INDUSTRY
COLLAB: SESSION 1** **11:30**

**STUDENT & INDUSTRY
COLLAB: SESSION 2** **1:30**

**REGISTRATION &
OPENING RECEPTION** **3:00**

WELCOME REMARKS **4:30**

**INGREDIENT APPROVAL
PATHWAYS** **4:45**

DINE AROUNDS **7:00**

TUESDAY

WELCOME & UPDATES **8:15**

**MARKETING, ECONOMICS &
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR** **8:45**

**PET NUTRITION &
INNOVATION** **10:30**

LUNCH **11:45**

**PROCESSING & ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE** **1:15**

**FROM KIBBLE TO
CHEMISTRY** **3:00**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS **3:15**

FROM CONCEPT TO BOWL **4:00**

**THE VALUE OF ACADEMIA
& INDUSTRY
COLLABORATION PANEL** **4:40**

RECEPTION & BANQUET **6:30**



Pre Event

STUDENT & INDUSTRY COLLAB

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What is STUDENT & INDUSTRY Collab?



The goal of Student & Industry Collab is help students connect with industry professionals, explore careers in pet food, refine their résumés, and build relationships that lead to internships and jobs, while **providing companies with an opportunity to meet, mentor, and recruit the next generation of talent.**

Section 1

This session was geared toward freshman and sophomore undergraduate students who wanted to learn about the industry and jumpstart their careers. They had the opportunity to learn from industry experts about different careers in the pet food industry and to dig deeper into what they might want to do with their education and degree, in a fun and interactive way.

Section 2

The second session focused on preparing upperclassmen and graduate students to take the next step. Students were exposed to potential careers in the industry, met leaders across various areas, and took part in a professional development activity led by industry expert Dr. Melissa Weber. They also had the opportunity to peer-network and fine-tune the interviewing and networking skills necessary to land an internship or job.



STUDENT & INDUSTRY COLLAB

POWERED BY  WILBUR-ELLIS



Day One
**Updates on
Ingredient
Approval
Pathways**



Haley Larson

Kansas State University
Assistant Professor





Amy Tryon

Hill's Pet Nutrition

*Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs
- North America*



Eric Altom

Balchem

*Director - Innovation for
Companion Animals; Technical
Nutritionist*



Garret Ashabranner

Kansas State University

*Scientific Review of Ingredient
Submissions (SRIS) Program
Manager*



Haley Larson

Kansas State University

Assistant Professor



Kathy Gross

Kansas State University

Adjunct Professor

Day One **Discussion Panel**

Ingredient Approval Pathways



Day One Photos



Dine Arounds

Attendees had the opportunity to participate in optional dinners at Manhattan restaurants. Sponsors host reserved tables and lead conversations around topics of interest to the attendees while each individual pays for dinner and drinks on their own. This year's dinners featured:

- Women in Petfood Leadership - Liquid Art Winery
- Extru-tech - Bourbon & Baker
- Hill's Pet Nutrition - El Patron
- Wilbur-Ellis - Bootsie's
- Zinpro - Tallgrass Tap House
- Parker Freeze Dry - Houlihan's
- U.S. Sorghum Checkoff Program - Nico's Little Italy

Day Two

Marketing, Economics & Consumer Behavior



Aleksan Shanoyan

Kansas State University
Professor

Talk Title:

*From Wishlist to Shopping Cart:
Understanding Pet Food Buyers' Preferences
and Purchasing Behavior*

Lonnie Hobbs, Jr.

Kansas State University
Assistant Professor

Talk Title:

*Pet Food Perspectives: Exploring Customer
Perceptions and Value of Sustainability and
Other Product Attributes*



Day Two

Pet Nutrition & Innovation



Julia Guazzelli Pezzali

Kansas State University
Assistant Professor & Pet Food Program Director

Talk Title:

From Trend to Care: What Nutritional Priorities Should Guide the Cat Ownership Surge?

Angela Paxton

Hill's Pet Nutrition
Manager, Regulatory Affairs

Talk Title:

Unlocking Global Markets: Your Guide to APHIS Export Approval



Day Two

Processing & Artificial Intelligence



Jay Pokorny

Extru-Tech, Inc.
Director of Strategic Innovation

Talk Title:
Optimizing Production With Process Analytics

Allison Blomme

Kansas State University
Ph.D. Student

Talk Title:
The Digital Age: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Pet Food Production



Day Two

Closing Presentations



Yong-Cheng Shi

Kansas State University
Professor

Talk Title:

From Kibble to Chemistry: Insights into Starch Analytics and Method Selection

Leah Lambrakis

Simmons Pet Food
VP of Research & Development, Nutrition, & Scientific Affairs

Talk Title:

From Concept to Bowl: Translating Vision Into a Successful New Product to Market





Jane Schuh

Kansas State University
*Director of Agricultural Research
and Associate Dean for Research
and Graduate Programs*



Leah Lambrakis

Simmons Pet Food
*VP of Research & Development,
Nutrition, & Scientific Affairs*



Melissa Weber

Rangen Pet Nutrition
Director of Technical Services



Rachelle Banwart

Kansas State University
*Executive Director of Corporate
Engagement*



Aleksan Shanoyan

Kansas State University
Professor

Day Two **Discussion Panel**

*The Value of Academia
& Industry
Collaboration:
How to Build Lasting,
Impactful Connections
for Mutual Support*





Friend of Pet Food Program
2025 Award Winners
Melissa Weber & Leah Lambrakis



Day Two
Photos

Student Engagement

Pet Food Collab 2025 showcased the work of many talented graduate students from many departments, presenting research on a wide range of topics related to pet food science including pet nutrition and health, pet food safety, consumer behavior and marketing and pet food processing. The event featured four oral presentations and twelve research posters on display.

Oral Presentations

Nayara Mota Miranda Soares

Effects of red sorghum bran inclusion in extruded diets on apparent total tract digestibility of macronutrients and gross energy, fecal quality, hematology and serum biochemistry profile of healthy adult dogs

Nilsson Toro

Evaluation of cleaning and disinfection strategies against Escherichia coli aggregate cells and biofilm in trailers for animal transportation

Tucker Graff

Use of insect meals in dry expanded dog food: Impact of composition and particulate flow characteristics on extrusion process and kibble properties

Youhan Chen

Comparing poultry meal-based diet & cricket flour (Gryllobates sigillatus)-based diet on the postprandial amino acid response in adult dogs



Poster Presenters

Adina Lima de Santana,
Amelia Huebsch & Cody Robertson,
Aysu Dennis,
Conrad Kabus,
Delaney New,
Joana Schroeder de Souza,
Kanyon Alexander,
Katelyn Bailey-Wisnieski,
Larissa Koulicoff (2),
Nayara Mota Miranda Soares,
Victoria Lopez





PET FOOD
—C^{PAW}LLAB—
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*Save
the
Date*

OCTOBER 14-15, 2026





Our Contact



petfood@ksu.edu



k-state.edu/petfoodcollab



Pet food Collab



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UNIVERSITY.

College of Agriculture

PET  **FOOD**
PROGRAM 

