



2023 Student Careers Program

Wednesday, April 12

Minneapolis Convention Center

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Room 211 AB

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Speed Networking and
Poultry Careers Panel Discussion

Blake Van Denburgh, Cargill – MODERATOR

- Tim Hopson, Director- Poultry Business Unit, Vaxxinova
- Dr. Joe Sullivan, Director of Pullets and Staff Veterinarian, Herbruck's Poultry Ranch
- Nick Hermanson, Board Director, West Liberty Foods
- Eric Fritsch, Chief Information Officer, Versova
- John Elliott, Senior Trader, Tropical Oils, Cargill

11:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Visit the PEAK Trade Show and connect with a Poultry
Ambassador from the industry



About the Panelists

Tim Hopson, Director- Poultry Business Unit, Vaxxinova
tim.hopson@vaxxinova.com

Tim earned a B.S. in Poultry Science from Virginia Tech in 1997. Later (in 2005), he earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from James Madison University. Upon graduation from Virginia Tech, Tim moved back to Harrisonburg, VA (his home) where he started his first 9 years of his career in the poultry industry working, primarily, in live operations at Georges Foods & Cargill. He worked as a Service Tech for the Broiler and later the Breeder departments during his time, at Georges Foods. In addition, he worked as a production supervisor in 2nd processing at the processing plant for Georges Foods. The last 2 years of this time in operations was spent as a Hatchery Manager for Cargill Turkeys, in Harrisonburg.

In 2006, Tim moved to the allied industry, assuming a role as Key Account Manager for a poultry vaccine company, Lohmann Animal Health. During his time at Lohmann, he later assumed the role as Country Manager (National Sales Manager) and then Director of Sales & Tech Services for North America. Lohmann was acquired by Elanco Animal Health in 2014.

From 2014- 2019 Tim worked in the Poultry Business Unit at Elanco Animal Health, as a District Sales Manager. First responsible for the vaccine business, then later (*as integration progressed*) responsible for a team of Key Account Managers servicing the U.S. Poultry Industry.

In 2019, Tim had the opportunity to go to work for Vaxxinova US (where he works, today). Vaxxinova was new to the United States with an acquisition of Epitopix in 2018 (formerly a company within the Wilmar Poultry Group, based in Willmar, Minnesota). Prior to Vaxxinova, Epitopix strategically partnered with other animal health companies for sales and marketing functions. Tim's first role was to start building out a poultry and cattle sales team—with focus first on the poultry business. Vaxxinova US has since acquired Newport Laboratories, based in Worthington, MN with strong cattle and swine business, as well as, expanded its



poultry and cattle business out of Willmar. Vaxxinova US, currently has 3 business units (Poultry, Cattle, & Swine). Tim is responsible for the Poultry Business and is in the role Director-Poultry Business Unit.

Dr. Joe Sullivan, Director of Pullets and Staff Veterinarian, Herbruck's Poultry Ranch
joe.sullivan@herbrucks.com

Joe obtained his bachelor's degree at St. John's University and his Master's degree in Public Health from Virginia Tech with a focus in infectious diseases. He attended veterinary school at the Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. Throughout his time in Blacksburg, VA, he continued to participate in poultry research at the Center for Molecular Medicine and Infectious Diseases. After graduating, Joe began his career at Herbruck's in the spring of 2018. As the director of pullet operations, he oversees the scheduling of new flocks, organizes regulatory testing, and ensures the health and vaccination of the pullets. In his free time, he enjoys the outdoors and exploring Michigan with his wife Maia, 2 year old Brendan, 2 month old Ellie, and their two Bernese Mountain Dogs.

Nick Hermanson, Board Director, West Liberty Foods
nhermandson@gmail.com

Nick Hermanson is a 5th generation farmer from Story City Iowa, where he raises corn, soybeans and turkey's. Nick's great uncle's started raising range turkeys on the family's dairy farm in the 1940's as a supplement to the families home delivery business. Today they raise 300k heavy tom turkeys in climate controlled buildings.

The Hermanson family was a founding member in the Iowa Turkey Grower's Cooperative that operates West Liberty Foods in West Liberty Iowa. West Liberty Foods is a farmer owned coop processing 5.5 million turkeys annually and offers a full line of further processed proteins to a variety of customers from retail to food service. They operate facilities in Iowa, Illinois and Utah.

Eric Fritsch, Chief Information Officer, Versova
efritsch@versova.com

Erik Fritsch, a distinguished IT professional, brings nearly two decades of experience in IT consulting, entrepreneurship, team development, and project



management to his role as Chief Information Officer at Versova Management. Erik employs first-principle thinking to tackle any challenge, task, or objective that

arises. Although he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science, Erik acquired this qualification after-the-fact as a formality. He firmly believes in prioritizing intangible qualities when hiring, and ironically for the students in attendance, academic credentials hold the least weight in his candidate evaluations.

Throughout his career, Erik has successfully owned and sold an IT consulting business, implemented numerous high-impact projects at Versova, and garnered praise for his innovative approach to IT design. As a panelist, Erik is enthusiastic about sharing his invaluable insights on the influence of emerging technologies, the present and future of "the farm," and the ongoing potential of the agricultural industry for technology-forward thinkers. He's here for the uniques, dreamers, outcasts, thinkers, contrarians with a professional and articulating twist.

During his downtime, Erik enjoys a wide range of interests, including reading, research, AI, pinball, baking, antiquing, motorcycling, MMA training, cryptocurrency and way too many odd and contrasting interests to list!

John Elliott, Senior Trader, Tropical Oils, Cargill

J_Elliott@cargill.com

No bio provided.