

WHERE'S THE BEEF? Well, at Cal Poly, much of it is moving to greener pastures.

Three new animal science facilities are now under construction: a \$5-million Animal Nutrition Center, a \$3-million Beef Center and a \$4.5-million Meats Processing Center.

Construction of the Poly Canyon Village student housing project is driving the move and expansions.

"These centers are going to be fantastic for our students," said Animal Science Department Chair Andy Thulin. "They will be able to work with cutting-edge equipment in spacious facilities that reflect the state of the industry."

The new Beef Center is a prime example. Instead of one bovine embryo transfer chute and an embryology lab in a converted 60-year-old field shed, the new center will have 10 embryo transfer chutes adjacent to a brand new, state-of-the-art lab. Students will be able to implant fertile embryos from prize cows into eight to 10 recipient cows all at once.

The center will also house the annual Bull Test, where students and faculty feed, monitor and evaluate up to 300 bulls for six months before the best are sold at auction.

The new Beef Center sits atop a hill overlooking 2,200 acres of gently rolling rangeland on Cal Poly's Escuela Ranch across from Cuesta College on Highway 1. In addition to the embryo-transfer stalls, it has research labs, classrooms and meeting rooms, a large covered arena for auctions or shows, seven 2- to 3-acre feeding pens, eight lay-up pens for treating sick animals, a hay barn and a commodity barn.

While it provides improved terrain, grazing and facilities for livestock, the center is nine miles from the campus core. Two large passenger vans will shuttle students and faculty.

Two other animal science centers under construction are located on the main university campus near the Poultry Unit. The Animal Nutrition Center will replace the 60-year-old feed mill. With standard commercial plant design, all operations will be enclosed for precise quality- and ingredient-control and efficient production. Set to open in December, it will still produce all the feed needed for Cal Poly livestock.

Completion will place Cal Poly in the company of only three other U.S. universities with commercial-grade feed production facilities and programs: Kansas State, North Carolina State, and Texas A&M, said Thulin.

"Our students are going to learn how to manage a feed production center, how to deal with all of the Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration regulations and reporting, and how to manage teams of people to get the job done," Thulin said. "That's why our graduates can walk out of here and right into jobs."

The new Meats Processing Center will offer similar experience. Scheduled to come online in 2007, it consolidates swine and beef cattle harvesting and meat processing operations in one location, with the latest equipment and technology. "The livestock will come in one end of the building and the finished product will come out the other -- in some cases, fully cooked," Thulin said.

Further on the horizon is a new \$1-million Beef Cattle Evaluation Center next to the Parker Barn on Mt. Bishop Road. The project is now in the planning stages.

The changes are bringing animal science facilities into the 21st century, but with a price tag. Of the \$14-million total cost, the state provided \$8 million. The College of Agriculture has secured another \$3.4 million in private funding. That includes \$1 million for the new Meats Processing Center from the Lau family of Modesto and a little over \$2.4 from other sources. Industry support has been generous, especially in donations of equipment.

Another \$2.4 million is still needed. The funds are critical to the future of the college and its students, Thulin said. "Our programs are on the cutting edge -- the embryo transfer programs, the animal nutrition programs and research that our undergraduate students get to participate in. There's not another university in the country that does it like this."

For details on how to support completion of the animal science facilities, contact the Animal Science Department at animalscience@calpoly.edu or 805-756-2419. —Teresa Hendrix □

