

THE STEVE BISHOP EARLY CAREER AWARD SPONSORED BY KTN

2019 WINNER

TOMAS TUBRITT, TEAGASC MOORPARK



Can you tell us about your professional and academic background?

Currently I am a Teagasc Walsh Scholar PhD student based in Teagasc Moorepark in Ireland. I plan to have my studies completed by July 2020. The focus of my research is to identify and evaluate superior varieties of perennial ryegrass for ruminant grazing production systems. My thesis supervisors are Dr. Michael O'Donovan, Head of the Grassland Science department in Teagasc and Prof. Trevor Gilliland, Queen's University Belfast. I have also collaborated with Luc Delaby of INRAE, France. Previously I graduated in 2017 from University College Dublin with a BSc(Ag) in Animal and Crop Production.

How has winning the Steve Bishop award impacted on your career?

The Steve Bishop award was an excellent opportunity to use and demonstrate the skills I have developed during my PhD. I was able to take part in a unique grazing study where I developed new experimental techniques and gained expert knowledge in design, management and analysis of grassland studies. During my visit I made countless contacts who took a real interest in my research and were very giving with their time and forthcoming with their thoughts and ideas about future pastoral farming. In the future such contacts may be valuable for collaborations and possible job opportunities

Why did you enter the Steve Bishop award?

I had been in contact with Dr. Cathal Wims about visiting the Forage Value Index trial in New Zealand and we had provisionally agreed times, roles, etc. As a member of the BSAS I was aware of the generous opportunities they award student members and investigated possible studentships that I could apply to. I found details relating to the Steve Bishop award on the BSAS website and finding that my application would fit the scope of the award I entered.

How will you develop your research in the future?

Perennial ryegrass selection indices are a relatively new development in grassland science. Travelling to another dairying region that are also developing and fine tuning this new technology was a great opportunity to



learn from. On return to Ireland, such experiences have focused the future goals I want to achieve for the PPI. I have also gained an extra appreciation for grassland systems that operate differently from Ireland due to more extreme constraints imposed on such systems (climate, regulation, etc.). The increased awareness I have developed will improve me as a researcher, influencing my opinions, critical thinking and future outlooks for ruminant production systems.

What were the key challenges involved with your research/project/attending meeting or conference?

Ensuring that the project I visited was a worthwhile experience and that I would return with new skills and knowledge was the main challenge. Thankfully from speaking with Cathal I was assured that the project I would assist in was relevant to my own research and that I would be a welcome addition to the research team. Flexibility was also an important concern as I still had to make time to complete my own research and I wanted to make most efficient use of my time in New Zealand to visit other research centres, farms, etc.

Do you have a message or a prompt for anyone thinking about entering a professional award?

Go for it! As I mentioned the BSAS have been very good to me during my relatively short research career. If you have any questions about possible awards, then enquire. All staff and members associated with the BSAS are more than happy to help. If you are unsuccessful in your first attempt, then ask for feedback, learn from your mistakes and if possible try again.

How will winning this award help to champion the animal science and technology sector?

Without the generosity of the BSAS, young researchers like myself would have little opportunity to use and demonstrate the skills we have developed during the early parts of our career. These awards also allow young researchers to develop new skills and to collaborate with leading researchers from around the world. The animal science community benefits from this collaboration through transfer of knowledge between countries and research centres allowing for innovative solutions to be developed that increase the efficiency of animal production, fueling rural economies and overcoming potential obstacles to progress.