

# CVM

## Open House 2006

A petting zoo, horse and dog demonstrations, and large animal exhibits were all highlights of the College of Veterinary Medicine's 2006 Open House. The April 7 and 8 event drew about 2,500 visitors.

"For more than 20 years, the annual open house has been a chance for the public to see what our college and veterinary medicine have to offer," said Dr. Stanley Robertson, CVM associate professor and coordinator of the Office of Special Programs.

Robertson added that the open house is primarily a student-driven event, organized and run by first- and second-year veterinary students.

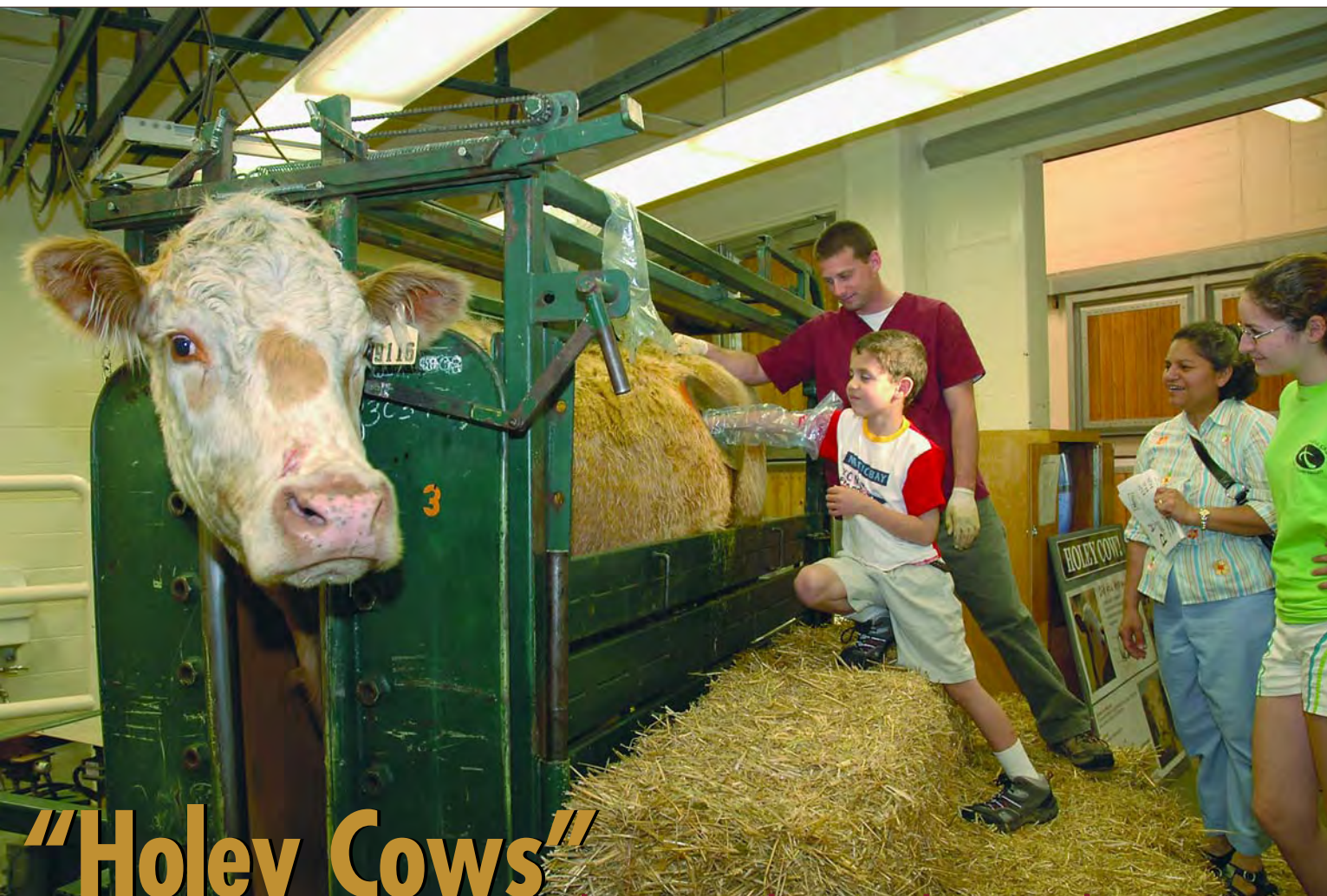


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The annual CVM open house provides "hands-on" activities, including opportunities to reach inside a steer's stomach, right.





# "Holey Cows"

## Educate Students, Aid Research

By Emily Cole

Ten-year-old steers are very uncommon since most go to market by the age of 2, but Peaches is living out his life at Mississippi State University with something that makes him even more rare. He has a 6-inch hole in his side.

The gentle steer is one of 11 fistulated steers, sometimes called "holey cows," at MSU that are used for research and educational purposes. Peaches was on display at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine's annual open house. The steer braved visitors who put on long plastic gloves and put their hands through the hole in his side.

Brian Rude, an associate professor in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, said the steers are primarily used for research.

"I can use those research animals and the research facilities to piggyback with teaching, both for college students and for public education and school children," Rude said. "We try to use it as a tool to educate the public about what we do here."

Having a steer available for children to see and touch also helps to educate them about agriculture, Rude said.

"School children today are so far removed from where food comes from, how we get it and what we do, that it is a nice way of being able to get to them, catching their attention," he said.

Cows with holes in their sides do grab the public's attention.

"It catches people a little off guard, and that usually translates into something they are going to remember," Rude said. "There are several benefits for these kinds of exposures, especially for younger children. It will pique some of their interests so that they choose a career in agriculture, whether it is growing crops or producing animals or maintaining their health through veterinary medicine."

Whether for research or education, these holey cows are a valuable tool for the scientists who use them. When not on display at the open house, Peaches and the 10 other fistulated steers are used in dietary research. The fistula, or hole in the steer's side, is fitted with a rubber stopper, or canula. The opening allows researchers easy access to the cow's rumen, a large portion of the stomach that acts as a fermentation vat, Rude said.

Fluid taken from the rumen can be used in the lab to test digestion rates of different diets. Scientists can also leave different types of feed—stored in nylon bags in the rumen—and evaluate the amount of time needed for digestion, Rude said.

Having the fistulated steer exhibit at open house is a joint effort between the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences.