

Vita

Rhonda Michelle, daughter of Mark and Leone Hoffman of Eldon, Missouri, was born on July 5, 1969. She was first interested in horses as a young girl, riding in the oak-hickory woods of central Missouri on an Appaloosa named Sparky. Rhonda received her Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science at Truman State University in 1992. While there, she was involved in Horseman's Association as the Public Relations officer, Agricultural Club, and she served as an undergraduate teaching assistant. She was named Outstanding Senior in Agricultural Science in 1992. Due to a keen interest in the supplementation of grazing horses, Rhonda was attracted to Virginia Tech for its pasture research facility in Middleburg. She was awarded a John Lee Pratt Graduate Assistantship in Animal Nutrition from 1992–1994, and she completed a Master of Science in Animal and Poultry Sciences in 1994, at Virginia Tech, where she studied stress during weaning of foals. Rhonda was awarded a John Lee Pratt Graduate Fellowship in Animal Nutrition in 1994–1997, and she completed the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Animal and Poultry Sciences at Virginia Tech in June 1997. Her professional goals include the continued improvement of recommendations for optimal nutrition of grazing horses and the promotion of the horse for pleasure, sport, therapy and education.