Death of Dr. Gordon L. Woods

Email Announcement

Dear SSR Friends and Colleagues:

This morning, we received the sad news of the death of Dr. Gordon L. Woods on August 20, 2009. Dr. Woods was an internationally recognized equine reproduction specialist and a pioneer in the use of the horse as a model for exploring human health issues,. He was a member of the faculty of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Colorado State University.

The funeral will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 26, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Second Ward Stake Center at 1657 S. Blaine St., Moscow, Idaho.

Obituary

Dr. Gordon Woods, one of the premier equine reproduction specialists in the world and a pioneer in the use of the horse as a model for exploring human health issues, died Thursday, Aug. 20, at Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland, Colo. He was 57.

Woods led the team at the University of Idaho that produced the world's first equine clone—a perfect mule foal named Idaho Gem—on May 4, 2003. Idaho Gem's brothers—Utah Pioneer and Idaho Star—were born later that year. The accomplishment thrust the team's research onto the international stage; media outlets around the globe covered the event, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, the BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Company, the Australian Broadcasting Company and the Singapore Press. The ground-breaking research was first published in the prestigious Journal of Science.

In 2004, Dr. Woods was a featured participant in the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting at Seattle. Later in 2004, he was chosen to participate in EuroScience in Stockholm to talk about how scientists can successfully communicate with the media.

As scientifically and commercially significant as the cloning was to the horse industry, Dr. Woods was most excited about further exploring the connection between the cellular biology that led to the clone success and the cellular activity associated with age-onset diseases in humans such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's Disease. After the cloning project, he continued to use the horse as a model for better understanding human health.

He was a dedicated family man, who deeply loved his wife of 37 years, Shauna. Fresh flowers often adorned her desk at work—gifts from Gordon "just because." Every Sunday afternoon, he hand-wrote letters to each of his four children, sharing the events of the week

and fatherly advice. He always carried and was quick to share photographs of his children and grandchildren.

Gordon also loved God, whom he often referred to as “The Big Guy.” He was a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and devoted many hours of his time working for the church, especially with young people. He was an avid journal writer and exercise hound.

Gordon was proud to be a native Idahoan and especially enjoyed and appreciated its natural beauty. He considered the back country of the Selway River sacred space and hiked its peaks and valleys as often as possible. Every year, he would start training weeks in advance for his weeklong backpacking trip with his sons, Ben and Jonathan. Before launching the cloning project, he took fellow team members Dr. Dirk Vanderwall and Dr. Ken White up the Selway—a trip that set the tone of teamwork and commitment that characterized their work together.

Gordon was born July 14, 1952, to Leo Carlon Woods and Gale Marie Shearer. He grew up in northern Idaho’s Clearwater River Valley, attending Lewiston High School. After attending Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, Woods completed his baccalaureate degree at the UI. He earned his doctor of veterinary medicine degree at Colorado State University in 1975.

Gordon worked as a practitioner at the Lewiston Veterinary Clinic, a seven-person, mixed practice, from 1978–79. He decided to continue his education and completed his residency in large animal reproduction at the University of Pennsylvania, New Bolton Center.

He then enrolled at the University of Wisconsin where he worked with Dr. O.J. Ginther and earned his master’s and doctoral degrees in reproductive biology. He joined the faculty of the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University in 1983 as an assistant professor.

He returned to Idaho in 1986, founding the Northwest Equine Reproduction Laboratory and teaching at Washington State University where he earned the Norden Distinguished Teacher Award in 1988. Later in 1989, he joined the University of Idaho where he served as a professor in the Department of Animal and Veterinary Science until 2007, when he moved his program to Colorado State University.

He founded a private company CancEr2 to explore basic research on the physiological bases of cancer in 1998 and served as its president. He also served as president of EquinE2, a company created to commercialize horse reproduction technology and was a principal in another company, ClonE2, which was formed to offer horse cloning services commercially.

Gordon is survived by his wife, Shauna of Fort Collins, Colo.; his daughter, Stephanie of Fort Collins, Colo.; his son, Jonathan, wife Mariana and their children, Natalia and Marcus of Edinburgh, Scotland; his son, Benjamin, wife Joanne and their sons, Alec and Nathanael of Mason City, Iowa; and his daughter Liza, husband Greg and their sons, Liam and Davis of Golden, Colo.; his mother, Gale Sego of Grangeville; his brothers, Dallas and Glen Sego, of

Stites; sisters, Debbie Stevens of Moscow and Gwen Sego of Missoula, Mont.; and numerous other relatives.

The funeral will be held at 11 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 26, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Second Ward Stake Center at 1657 S. Blaine St., Moscow, Idaho. Short's Funeral Chapel is handling the arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be sent to benefit Colorado Operation: Military Kids (OMK). Please make checks payable to the Colorado 4-H Foundation/OMK, Colorado State University Extension, 4040 Campus Delivery, Fort Collins CO 80523-4040.