

## **Colorado State University Recognizes Cleon Kimberling as Livestock Leader**

**FORT COLLINS** - His business card says Cleon Kimberling specializes in sheep health and bicycling.

An unlikely combination. But it's a perfect description of Kimberling: The 81-year-old veterinarian, who lives east of Fort Collins, is known throughout the West for tackling sheep illness and disease, and he's dedicated to riding his recumbent-style bicycle for his own health.

"Dr. Kimberling is an icon in the sheep industry. He's helped eradicate lots of disease," said Terry Engle, a professor in the Colorado State University Department of Animal Sciences whom Kimberling has mentored. "He is well-respected by producers, colleagues and students, and has always been highly focused on making sure his students could implement textbook learning into real-world livestock production. He is also an excellent problem-solver."

The CSU Department of Animal Sciences has named Kimberling the 2011 Livestock Leader for his exceptional contributions to the livestock industry. He will be honored Saturday, Jan. 14, during CSU Day at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Those honored with the prestigious Livestock Leader award are dedicated to the livestock industry and are widely known for leadership and innovation in their fields.

"Not in my wildest dreams did I think I should receive an award like this," Kimberling said, noting his admiration for previous recipients. "I have a holiday every day that I've worked."

Kimberling is a valued member of CSU's agricultural family: He earned a bachelor's degree in animal science from CSU in 1951, and a degree in veterinary medicine in 1959. For 40 years, from 1965 to 2005, Kimberling was a faculty member in CSU's renowned College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and during this time also worked as a CSU Extension veterinarian.

Through his work, Kimberling has embodied the CSU missions in teaching, research and service, said Kevin Pond, head of the Department of Animal Sciences.

"As a CSU faculty member and Extension veterinarian for four decades, Dr. Kimberling dedicated himself to learning about livestock health problems, to the quest for solutions, and to sharing with both students and producers important discoveries," Pond said. "He is known among friends and colleagues as a lifelong learner and teacher, and we appreciate everything Dr. Kimberling has done to gain and share knowledge about the critical issue of livestock health."

Kimberling has focused on herd health management for dairy cattle, range beef cattle and range sheep.

He developed for the dairy industry a brucellosis ring test that allows monitoring and surveillance of infection in large herds using bulk tank sampling. He also helped develop and

standardize the antigen used for the brucellosis card test, a rapid test for detecting the disease in beef and dairy cows.

This work has aided in a near eradication of brucellosis in many herds and entire states.

Kimberling's contributions to the sheep industry are equally impressive. He championed feed and nutrition standards for flocks, including breakthroughs in the emerging field of micro-nutrients.

To more accurately measure the levels of these micro-nutrients, a liver sample was necessary. So Kimberling developed a liver biopsy instrument and a technique to efficiently collect samples.

"I have always looked to improve the health of animals because it makes overall animal production more efficient," Kimberling said. "The big picture is healthier populations of sheep or cattle, and thus great efficiency for the producer."

Kimberling grew up on a farm near Imperial, Neb., and at an early age became interested in animal health after an outbreak of disease on his family farm. It inspired him to enter a profession to help other producers with animal disease prevention.

He has poured similar energy into his own health.

After he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, at the age of 65, Kimberling embarked on his first long bicycle trip – from Oceanside, Calif., to Bar Harbor, Maine – some 3,500 miles. Several years ago, he rode his bike to Nebraska for his 50th high school reunion. He has also ridden the entire perimeter of the United States.

Kimberling's battle with cancer – currently in remission – comes after his years of work battling diseases that afflict animals.

"Like my dedication to promoting advancements in livestock health, my goals with bicycling have always been to keep my mind and body in shape," Kimberling said. "You can't let your mind or body deteriorate."

At age 81, Kimberling stays active. He works with Optimal Livestock Services, a Fort Collins-based company that specializes in sheep health, reproduction and management. Kimberling is also involved with the Food Bank for Larimer County and church-related activities.

Kimberling will be honored at the Department of Animal Sciences Social and Livestock Leader of the Year presentation at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, in the Centennial Room in the Hall of Education at the National Western Stock Show.