

## 2024 MARVIN AND ARLENE LARGE PIONEER AWARD

Presented to

**Richard G. “Dick” Saacke, Ph.D.**



The 2024 Marvin and Arlene Large “Pioneer Award” is presented posthumously by the Beef Reproduction Task Force to Richard G. “Dick” Saacke, Ph.D. in recognition of his significant contributions to the greater understanding of the role of bull physiology in reproductive success. As one of the few scientists with applied expertise in this area, Dr. Saacke was a popular figure in Task Force programs, known for explaining complicated topics in relatable ways.

Dr. Saacke was raised in Newark, NJ, and graduated with a BS in Animal Husbandry from Rutgers University in 1953. He continued his studies at Penn State University where he earned his MS (1955) and Ph.D. (1962) focusing on reproductive physiology with his mentor, Dr. John Almquist.

From 1962 to 1965 Dr. Saacke was an assistant professor at Penn State University. He joined the Department of Dairy Science at Virginia Tech in 1965 and rose through the ranks to professor.

Dr. Saacke’s research interests were broad and combined basic biology with applied sciences. Topics ranged from acrosomal cap abnormalities of subfertile bulls, protein synthesis of mammary tissue, effects of freeze rate, thaw rate and glycerol level on bovine sperm frozen in straws, and the relationship of semen quality and fertility. During a sabbatical in Germany in the 1980’s, Dr. Saacke and colleagues developed a technique for recovery and examination of sperm from the zona pellucida of cattle. These accessory sperm would be the focus of numerous studies throughout the last decade of his career, as Dr. Saacke and graduate students described a positive association of median accessory sperm number per embryo with fertilization rate and embryo quality.

Dr. Saacke was often noted for his work describing compensable and uncompensable traits of semen, resulting in invited speaking engagements domestically and internationally, to audiences composed of producers, veterinarians, and research faculty.

He understood the audience he was speaking to; nevertheless, he challenged them to understand the breadth and depth of the discussion at hand. Over his career he made numerous presentations at the Annual Conference of the Society of Theriogenology, International Congress on Animal Reproduction, Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle Symposium, and the National Association of Animal Breeders Technical Conference on Reproduction and AI.

Throughout his career, Dr. Saacke received many awards. Upon hearing that Dr. Saacke would be the recipient of the Pioneer Award, his wife Ann stated, "Dick would be both humbled and surprised by this honor and would've been the first to note how many others contributed to the successes realized in the field."

Dick retired in 2001; however, as a professor emeritus, he remained active serving on graduate committees, consulting, and as an invited speaker. In 2006, he was recognized with the L.E. Casida Award for graduate education by the American Society for Animal Science. Dr. Saacke mentored over 20 graduate students, and trips to Select Sires in Ohio immersed us in the real world and invigorated us to further understand the link between basic science and the application of new knowledge. Many of Dr. Saacke's former graduate students worked as research, teaching and extension faculty, for AI studs, or in human fertility clinics.

In recognition of Dr. Saacke's accomplishments and continuing impact, the Beef Reproduction Task Force is pleased to recognize Dr. Richard G. "Dick" Saacke with the 2024 Marvin and Arlene Large "Pioneer Award."