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## **UW-River Falls seeks to expand equine studies through NSF grant**

Casie Bass, an assistant professor in the Animal and Food Science Department at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, has initiated a grant application to help drive her research on the survivability of foals and maternal recognition of pregnancy in horses. The grant is a National Science Foundation (NSF) Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) grant to expand groundbreaking work in the field of equine sciences.

About one in three mammalian pregnancies ends in miscarriage, according to Bass who is researching the 30-day process during which a mare both becomes pregnant and the unborn foal attaches to its mother's uterine wall. The exact process through which a mare's body determines it is pregnant is a mystery, she says, and solving it may lead to more healthy pregnancies.

"If I can help reduce pregnancy loss, it can increase the number of healthy foals born, and what a big picture we would have with other mammalian species," Bass said. "If I can better understand this mechanism, and how her body recognizes it's pregnant, I can absolutely impact those things."

According to the NSF's website, the CAREER program is designed to support early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic models in research and education and lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. CAREER is one of the most prestigious and competitive NSF grant programs.

"UW-River Falls values undergraduate research and that requires faculty to develop research programs which are both innovative and assessable so that undergraduate students can be active participants in publishable research," said Diane Bennett, director of Grants and Research at UW-River Falls. "We applaud Casie for her initiative not only in her research, but also for her plans to include the greater university community in this important field."

Founded in 1874, UW-River Falls is located in a scenic community just 30 miles from downtown St. Paul, Minn. UW-River Falls students are empowered, beginning in their

first semester, to participate in hands-on research, global travel, and collaborative learning with award-winning and caring faculty.

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**Photo:** UW-River Falls instructor Casie Bass (center) and Tag, one of the university's horses, give students their undivided attention during a recent class session. Bass has applied for a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER grant to study the early stages of pregnancy in horses. Photo by Kathy Helgeson, UWRF staff.