

Scientist of the Month



Melissa Clark

Melissa Clark is a BLaST Scholar and a senior biological sciences major at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She was recently accepted and will be attending veterinary school at Colorado State University/ University of Alaska Fairbanks in their professional degree program where she will attend the first two years at UAF, and the last two years at CSU. Clark is from Ninilchik, Alaska, a small Russian village on the Kenai Peninsula, and enjoys being active through aerial silks, skiing, hiking, lifting, and horseback riding.

Research

Clark's research experience started in the molecular immunology lab investigating the antigen processing pathways in the immune response. Her current research is focused in the molecular biology lab, exploring the prevalence of the zoonotic disease *Leptospirosis* in Alaskan caribou and reindeer herds. Clark has presented at several conference and research events, including URSA Research Day, the Midnight Sun Science Symposium, the University of Alaska Biomedical Research Conference (UA-BRC), and the Canadian of Immunology Society Conference held in London, Ontario. This summer she will

head to Tahoe City, California to attend the Wildlife Disease Association conference. Clark's research experience has helped her understand the overarching goals of the One Health paradigm.

Mentoring

As a BLaST Scholar, Clark has been mentored by Research Advising and Mentoring Professional (RAMP) Emily Sousa. While in the immunology lab, she was mentored by BLaST Graduate Mentoring Research Assistant (GMRA) Tynan Becker, and is now mentored by Dr. Cristina Hansen in the Veterinary Medicine Department, a past BLaST Faculty Pilot Project awardee and now Postdoc. Clark has been a peer-mentor in many ways, which include as serving as an Alaska Future Farmers of America (FFA) state officer, where she mentored many high school students throughout the state in leadership skills. She also has volunteered as a UAF Orientation Leader, and is currently vice-president of the Aurora Aerial Arts club. Clark understands the value of quality mentorship at various stages in life, and hopes to follow in her mentors' footsteps. "BLaST has supported me immensely through my undergraduate career. All of the support I have gotten through this program is the reason that I am where I am today. I can't thank this program enough."

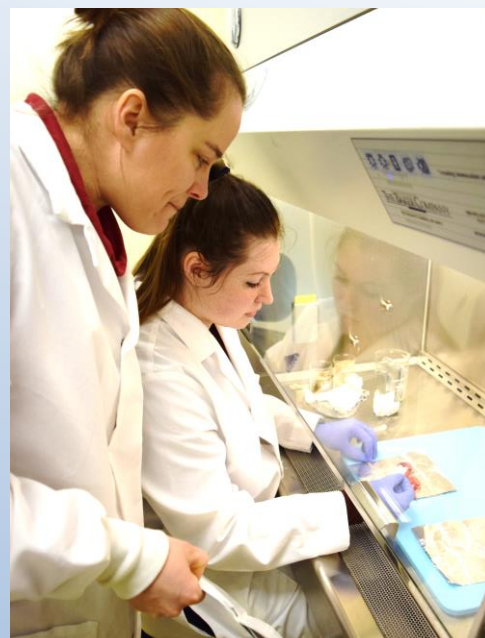


Photo above: BLaST Scholar Melissa Clark working under the direction of Dr. Cristina Hansen, March, 2019.