



# PORK CHECKOFF REPORT

JULY AUGUST 2024



## *New Funding Available to Help Improve Minnesota's Soil Health*

### **Applications for soil health equipment grants open August 1 and close August 30**

**St. Paul, MN:** Applications will soon open for the latest round of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Soil Health Financial Assistance Program grants.

The grants are available to individual producers, producer groups, and tribal and local governments to purchase or retrofit soil health equipment. Grant awards will provide up to 50% cost-share, with a minimum award of \$500 and a maximum award of \$45,000. The 2024 Legislature appropriated \$2.375 million for grants statewide, along with an additional \$495,000 available for grants in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona counties. The MDA will begin accepting applications August 1.

"Specialized, expensive equipment can be a barrier for farmers wanting to implement soil health practices, so it's important we invest in programs like the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program grants," said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. "The soil health benefits we see to water quality and our other natural resources go beyond a farm's border and can have a positive impact on many Minnesotans."



Examples of eligible new or used equipment include, but are not limited to, no-till drills, air seeders, strip tillage units, and more.

The Request for Proposals and the application link can be found at [www.mda.state.mn.us/soilhealthgrant](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/soilhealthgrant) once the application opens on August 1. Applications are due August 30, 2024. Awards will be announced by January 1, 2025.

This is the third round of Soil Health Financial Assistance Program grants. The second round awarded over \$2.3 million to 81 individuals and organizations across Minnesota. No-till drills, air seeders, and strip tillage equipment were among the most requested pieces of equipment. The second round received more than 280 applications for more than \$8.4 million - over 3.5 times the funding available.

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# REAL PORK Scholars

By Samantha Moser

Minnesota is the proud home of three graduate students selected to be National Pork Board's Real Pork Scholars.

The Real Pork Scholars professional, executive mentorship program is a two-year experience for graduate students whose studies are supportive to the swine industry. The program aims to take a "zoom out" approach into different areas such as law, communications, environmental studies, engineering, etc. Selected applicants receive a total of \$60,000 to support

## Beth Stevermer

is from Easton, Minnesota and an agriculture and environmental law student at Drake University. Growing up, she was very involved with Minnesota Pork. Stevermer volunteered with many oink outings, the Minnesota State Fair, and at Grandma's Marathon in Duluth. Through these experiences she developed a passion for engaging with consumers and showing them that pig farmers are good, caring people.



Stevermer felt it was a huge honor to be selected as a 2023 Real Pork Scholar.

***"The program has helped me build a stronger foundation and communication skills that have assisted me with further development of where I want to be in the future,"*** Stevermer said.

Upon graduating, she hopes to help producers navigate future changes in law to ensure they can continue growing safe and healthy pork. Stevermer also plans to continue being a leader for all pig farmers.

***"My goal is to be a voice for the next generation and inspire other women to know that there are places for them in the industry,"*** Stevermer said.



their education, an industry mentor, attend training seminars, and engage in networking opportunities.

***“The overall goal is training experts in various fields that are supportive to the areas our stakeholders have questions about and for participants to relay science into soundbites that are understandable to a multitude of audiences,”*** said Chelsey Van Genderen, National Pork Board Industry Relations Manager.

Fall of 2023 was the launch of the Real Pork Scholars program with a cohort of nine students from six universities across the country. Beth Stevermer, Sudario Roberto Sliva Junior, and Haley Schwecke are the students representing Minnesota in the 2023 cohort.



## Sudario Roberto Silva Junior

is a PhD student at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, studying swine nutrition. His studies focus on how diets affect intestinal microbiomes and gut health. Roberto grew up on a family farm in Brazil where they raised horses, cattle, and pigs.

His passion for pigs and pork stemmed from a family tradition. Each Christmas, they would eat a pork centered meal from an animal they had grown throughout the year. Raising these pigs sparked his passion for and interest in the industry. Roberto came to the U.S. 7 years ago and started working on a pig farm in Fairmont, Minnesota before he began his studies at the University of Minnesota.



***“It has been a huge honor and a fantastic experience being a Real Pork Scholar,”*** Roberto said.

The highlight of his experience has been connecting with pig farmers from across the country. He believes it gives him a “wholistic mindset” while conducting his research. Now, Roberto thinks about the scientific significance of a study, and how these findings can benefit a farmer.

“Sometimes in academia we are too far away from the real problem. Through this program I learned about the importance of using my knowledge and research to benefit producers,” Roberto said.

After finishing his PhD, Roberto hopes to work with producers while utilizing his knowledge. Some opportunities he is open to include being a swine nutritionist for a private company or research development into new technologies that will benefit farmers.

***“The past year as a Real Pork Scholar was amazing! I think every graduate student in the country should apply to be a part of the program,”*** Roberto said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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# REAL PORK Scholars

## Haley Schwecke

is from Gibbon, Minnesota and a graduate student at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. She is in the process of earning a Master of Science in Veterinary Medicine. Schwecke is currently studying diseases that cause lameness in growing pigs.

Growing up she was raised on a commercial and show pig operation. Schwecke was a part of Team Purebred with the National Pork Board which opened her eyes to many opportunities in the pig farming community. This made her realize that working with pigs was not just a hobby. She wanted it to be her lifestyle and future career.

***“I was so excited to be selected as a real pork scholar,”*** Schwecke said.

She believes that this program will help bridge the gap between scientists and producers. Being a Real Pork Scholar gave her a view of the pig farming community through a “bigger lens.”

“In graduate school, all you are doing is research and science, so your mind becomes wired to be scientific,” Schwecke said. “This program reminds us to take a step back and break down the research so that farmers can easily understand it.”



Schwecke has recently accepted a position as an applied research associate with the Swine Veterinary Center. She is excited to continue conducting research, but especially thrilled to be able to continue working with producers.

***“Everyone being more knowledgeable will give us the opportunity to tackle so many more issues,”*** Schwecke said.

All three Minnesotan Real Pork Scholars are extremely thankful for their experience in the program and are excited to begin sharing their expertise as they start their new careers.



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Learn more about the Real Pork Scholars program objectives and priorities at [porkcheckoff.org/about/leadership-opportunities/real-pork-scholars-program/](https://porkcheckoff.org/about/leadership-opportunities/real-pork-scholars-program/).



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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS FEATURE

# Brad Kluver



### Tell us about yourself and how you became involved in the farming community.

I was born and raised on a family farm outside of Northfield, Minnesota. Growing up I was very active in 4-H, showing pigs. Initially, my family had 120 sows and sold feeder pigs every week. In 1997, we put up our first finishing barn, bought into a sow co-op, and I have been raising pigs ever since.

I graduated from college with a degree in education. I taught Kindergarten in the Metro area for about three years before I decided to make a career change. Now, I work in animal nutrition at a local co-op and pursue farming on the side.

My wife, Katie, and I have two children together, Noah and Everly.

### Why did you decide to run on the Board of Directors?

I decided to run on the Board of Directors because I have always been passionate about the pork industry and I love what I do, day in and day out.

I also want to provide better opportunities for my children to enter the industry if they choose to. I believe that it is very important to provide an environment that enables the next generation to come back and continue working on the farm.

### What do you hope to accomplish during your time on the Board?

While serving on the Board, I hope to continue to build connections in the industry and community that allow me to help showcase the story of agriculture and the passion of every pig farmer in the state. Another goal that I have is to improve transparency around marketing and improve market access for independent producers. Lastly, I want to promote the next generation to drive innovation and adaptation of new ideas and technologies.

### In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing today's pig farmers in Minnesota?

As an independent producer, one of the major challenges I hear about and face myself is transparency in the marketplace. This also makes it a challenge to encourage the next generation to come back to the farm. I think that if we want to continue to improve as an industry, we need the younger leaders stepping in and unless we have an industry that is profitable, we will not be able to drive that.

### What are you most hopeful about for the future of Minnesota Pork?

Seeing Minnesota as a leader in the pork industry gives me a lot of hope for the future. We have robust representation, great energy, and an excellent culture within the state organization that makes me feel optimistic for the future. We will be able to continue to drive conversations locally and at the legislative level to promote MN pig farmers. The state has ambition and energy as well as people that embrace the culture that we need as independent producers.

### What is your favorite pork product/dish?

My favorite cut of pork is the pork butt. It is relatively easy to make, provides lots of meat, and goes well with just about any meal.

*\*\*Special Note: Brad was a Minnesota Pork intern in the summer of 2013!*



# YLAC RECAP

By Samantha Moser



## Future Leaders

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.” The tenth annual Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference (YLAC)

embraced the words of the former president. Over a span of three days, over 85 college aged participants dove into building themselves for their future and the future of the pork industry. The conference hosted multiple sessions in Mankato, MN on June 17th - 19th. Minnesota Pork sponsored and facilitated the event.

## The Power of Authenticity

YLAC started on Monday morning with an encouraging message from best-selling author and speaker Dr. Todd Dewitt. Dr. Dewitt spoke on the power of authenticity and being “more” in your personal life and at work. He gave great advice on how to achieve this.

- **Adopt a change mindset** – collaborate not dictate, be the change, not the boss, and have candor, not just kindness
- **If you keep following the rules, you will be medicore** – do new things to break the routine and remember that the child inside you is still there.
- **Choose perspective everyday** – there is always more than your current view.

## Entering the Job Market

Kevin Paulsen from the Newport Group spoke to the young leaders about the numerous factors that should be considered when choosing a future career.

- **Don't get wrapped up in the job title**
- **Consider for than financial compensation** – think about culture, benefits, location, and community

## HR Insights

A human resources panel discussion helped participants gain perspective of what employers as looking for. Attendees heard about the importance of internships, involvement in college, and personal values that all impact hiring decisions.

## Veterinarians Answer Tough Questions

Day two of YLAC kicked off with a panel discussion of veterinarians. These professionals spoke on the nature of their work. They also provided excellent insight on how to have a work-life balance in an occupation that can seem to consume much of your time and attention.

Dr. Spronk concluded the panel discussion by giving attendees his three basics of leadership.

1. **Understand Authority**
2. **Make the Decision**
3. **Be Humble** – never push, presume, or pretend and make corrections from feedback



## Build Trust and Add Value

Neal Hull, employee of the National Pork Board, educated participants on current efforts to drive domestic demand for pork. Hull also reminded attendees:

- Consumers **love** to hear from producers
- We **all** need to continually inspire people to “keep pork in the basket.”

## Revolutionizing the Pork Industry

Dr. Lindsay Case with PIC captivated the crowd speaking on the future of gene editing and the impact it will have on the pork industry. Dr. Case highlighted the importance of the development of the PRRS resistant pig.

1. Improve animal welfare
2. Reduce antibiotic use
3. Increase productivity and sustainability



## Celebrity Appearance

Congressman Brad Finstad joined participants for lunch and inspired with his journey from the farm to Congress.

## Building Bridges

Dr. Bill Doherty, co-founder of Braver Angels, lead participants through an interactive session on how to deal with differences and find common ground through the polarizing and dividing times our country is facing.



## Farmers Speak Out

The final panel at YLAC featured farmers. They spoke on navigating working with family, challenges they face, and their outlook for the future of their respective industries.

## The Reel Real

Brooke Clay Taylor stole the audiences' hearts with her raw and unfiltered story about her life's journey. Taylor spoke on her professional career in strategic communications and entrepreneurship in the agricultural industry, intertwined with the personal struggles of battling cancer and raising a family.

## A Little Fun

Young leaders had the chance to have some fun and give back to the community. Participants engaged in a service project, filling goodie bags for the Ronald McDonald House. To end the day, they went out for pizza, bowling, laser tag, and mini golf.



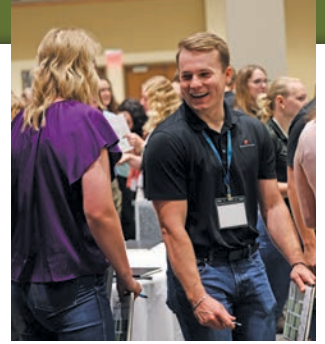
## The Power of Communication

Micah Spike Craven kicked off the last day of YLAC by sharing the keys to effective communication and relationship management. Some of his tips include:

- Deliver one thought to one set of eyes
- Earn Trust
- Display Integrity
- Be intentional in all you do

## Making an Impact

YLAC 2024 ended on a high note with Dr. Rick Rigsby, motivational speaker and best-selling author. Dr. Rigsby had the entire crowd on the edge of their seats talking about “going back to the basics”. Captivating the audience with his energy and optimism, Dr. Rigsby shared wisdom which inspired and empowered attendees to make an impact, rather than an impression.



## Sponsors

As we celebrate yet another year of bringing young agriculturalists together to develop skills and build their knowledge, the Minnesota Pork Board would like to thank all sponsors that helped make the Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference a success. The 2024 sponsors are:

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## SYNCHRONIZED DIVING DUO

# Kassidy Cook and Sarah Bacon

### #TeamPork



July was an exciting month at MPB! Cook and Bacon, nationally recognized divers who train in Minneapolis, MN, have qualified for #TeamPork.

As new members of Team Pork, the athletes will engage in social media, a community food bank donation, and in-person appearances on behalf of Minnesota Pork. Cook and Bacon will promote pork as a healthy protein source suitable to fit any diet. Cook and Bacon, along with Minnesota's pig farmers, care about fueling people with nutritious foods and building strong communities.

The duo is not only diving partners, but also have been friends since they were 10 years old. Cook and Bacon credit their success to having a strong friendship both in and out of the pool. Bacon is a former Minnesota Gopher diver and found her passion for the sport at the age of eight years old. Cook is a former diver at Stanford University and began diving at the age of four.

Follow along with the Minnesota Pork Board on social media to keep up with #MNPork, #CooknBacon, #TeamPork, and #DivingintoTeamPork. The organization is present on the platforms of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest and YouTube sharing promotion and education on behalf of Minnesota pig farmers.

## WORLD PORK EXPO as a Minnesota Pork Intern

*By: Samantha Moser*

The strong power of the pork industry was on full display at the 36th annual Work Pork Expo on June 4th and 5th in Des Moines, IA. Over 10,000 attendees gathered on the Iowa State Fairgrounds to hear from speakers, listen to panels, look through the trade show, network and eat some delicious pork with others who share their passion for pigs.

My experience at world pork exceeded all expectations! I had never attended the event before, so I was extremely excited when I had the opportunity to this year. While down there I spent much of my time attending seminars and connecting and networking with others. My favorite seminars talked about consumer segmentation and the Real Pork Trust Consortium. I loved the concept of these new marketing and communications strategies for reaching consumers. My biggest takeaway from these seminars is that we need to meet the consumer where they are. In the past, I had only thought about educating the consumer and trying to bring them to where we are. I can see how this strategy has a much higher chance at success instead of trying to change people's minds and lifestyles.

Overall, I had so much fun at WPX! I learned so much and made so many great connections and memories and can't wait to go back in the future.



*A portion of the Minnesota Pork team at World Pork Expo 2024. From left: Kate Maddock, Jill Resler, Bailey Ruen, Lauren Servick, Pam Voelkel, Sam Moser.*

## INTERNS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



### Natalie Compart



**Q: Where are you from and what college did you attend?**

**A:** I am from Morris, Minnesota. I earned a Bachelor of Animal Science degree from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

**Q: What year were you an intern for MN Pork?**

**A:** I served as a Minnesota Pork communications intern in 2013.

**Q: Please share your background in agriculture.**

**A:** I grew up on a small hobby farm where my parents keep a small flock of ewes still today. From helping with farm chores to showing livestock in 4-H, my passion for the agriculture industry began at a young age. Over the years, I showed pigs, sheep, cattle and rabbits. In high school, I was actively involved in 4-H and FFA, serving in many leadership roles throughout my years in both organizations. Through these organizations and guidance from my family and friends, my love for the agriculture industry continued to flourish, so much so that I pursued an animal science degree at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Since graduation, I have worked in various agricultural marketing and communications roles. I also stay involved in the industry outside of my career with the Nicollet County Pork Producers and by serving on the Nicollet County Extension Committee.

**Q: How did working for MN Pork contribute to your professional development?**

**A:** The Minnesota Pork internship was my first internship experience and it significantly contributed to my professional development by providing hands-on experiences in message development and producer and consumer outreach. I honed my skills in content creation, public speaking and event planning, which are essential for any career, especially the marketing and communications field.

The connections I made during this internship over 10 years ago have been key. They opened doors to valuable mentorship and

networking opportunities, helping me establish a strong professional network that continues to support my career growth.

**Q: Please share what other professional experiences you have had and where you are now in your career and personal life.**

**A:** Upon graduating from the University of Minnesota, I moved to Red Wing to direct the Goodhue County 4-H program, the third largest in the state, as the 4-H Extension Educator. In 2016, I relocated to Mankato with my husband and soon after began working as a communications specialist with AgPartners Cooperative. Following my role at AgPartners, I joined Minnesota State as an outreach and recruitment coordinator, focusing on agriculture programs across the 32 state colleges and universities.

Today, I work as a public relations supervisor for Curious Plot, a full-service marketing and communications agency for the food, agriculture, and companion animal markets. I have been with the agency for almost three years, developing and executing public relations plans that specifically support animal pharmaceutical and nutrition companies in the beef, dairy and swine industries.

I reside in Nicollet, Minnesota with my husband, Dusty and twin boys, Clayton and Carter. We enjoy having the opportunity to raise our boys on the farm and raise pigs for the family operation.

**Q: What is one piece of advice that you have for young professionals that want to obtain a career in agriculture?**

**A:** Take advantage of the opportunities to attend networking events, job shadow someone in the industry and intern with an agriculture company. The relationships and experiences you develop will allow you to learn and grow tremendously, both personally and professionally.

**Q: What is your favorite pork product/dish?**

**A:** Grilled pork tenderloin is hard to beat in my book.

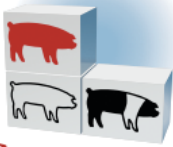


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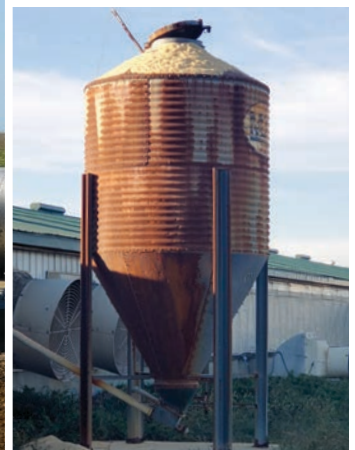
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# 2024 SCHOL



## Lincoln Becker

Lincoln Becker will be a sophomore at North Iowa Community College (NIACC) majoring in agriculture business. In college, Becker plays on the baseball team. His future plans are to transfer to a four-year university to broaden his knowledge and skills. Eventually, Becker plans to return to the family farm and be a leader in the pig industry.

***“ I have been actively involved in all phases of my family’s farming operation. I hope to acquire new and innovative skills that will benefit not only my family’s farm, but the whole pork industry.” - Lincoln Becker***



## Ella Thome

Ella Thome will be a senior at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities studying agricultural communications and marketing with minors in international agriculture, agricultural food business management, and animal science. Thome stays very active on the U of M campus filling various leadership roles in Beta of Clovia Sorority,

Block and Bridle, Agricultural Business Club, Agricultural Education, Communications, and Marketing Club, and Gopher Dairy Club. This summer she is the Cargill Swine Account Management Intern. Thome plans to finish her undergraduate degree and then begin working in the swine industry.

***“ I am dedicated to continuously learning and growing as a champion for the swine and pork industry. It is my sincere belief that investing in the next generation of leaders is crucial for the continued success and sustainability of the swine and pork industry.” - Ella Thome***



## Megan Meyer

Megan Meyer will be a senior at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities majoring in agricultural communications and marketing with minors in agricultural business and animal science. On campus, Meyer is involved in the Gopher Dairy Club, Beta of Clovia sorority, Agricultural Education, Communication

and Marketing Club, National Agri-Marketing Association, and the dairy judging team. She also serves as a communication assistant for the Real Pork Trust Consortium. Over the summer, Meyer is a crop insurance intern with Compeer Financial. Upon graduating, she hopes to work in a sales role for a dairy or swine pharmaceutical company.

***“ I have grown into the person I am today because of the impact that agriculture has had on my life. It only makes sense to continue to follow the path that I have been on and continue to keep agriculture at the core of everything I do.” - Megan Meyer***



## Baleigh Peterson

Baleigh Peterson will be a senior at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities studying agricultural communications and marketing with a minor in animal science. On campus, Peterson is a member of

the Beta of Clovia Sorority, Block and Bridle Club, Gopher Dairy Club, and the Agricultural Education, and Communication & Marketing Club. Once earning her degree, she plans to find a career that allows her to communicate with farmers and work to educate consumers on agricultural practices through events, writing, and various digital mediums. Peterson also looks forward to continuing to help her fiancé and his family with their crop and livestock operation.

***“I want to connect consumers to where their food comes from and ultimately put agriculture in the positive light that it deserves. Farmers often have a demanding job, and I want to help educate consumers on the significance of supporting farmers and what they do. This is important because we need agriculture and use it every day in some way, but not everyone understands the value it holds.” - Baleigh Peterson***



## Ava Schoenfeld

Ava Schoenfeld will be an incoming freshman at South Dakota State

University double majoring in agricultural business and animal science with an industry relations specialization with a minor in agricultural communications. Schoenfeld plans to be involved in Little International, SDSU Block and Bridle, and a sorority. Her future plans are undecided, but she has an interest in agricultural public policy as well as the junior show industry.

***“As I look to the future, my aspirations in pork production and the broader agricultural industry are driven by a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community engagement. By fostering a better understanding and appreciation of agriculture, I hope to inspire the next generation of farmers and consumers.” - Ava Schoenfeld***

## #PorkPlease

# EGG ROLL IN A BOWL

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp. sesame oil
- 1 small red onion (diced)
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. ginger (finely minced)
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 2 tsp. sriracha sauce
- 1 bag coleslaw mix (14 oz.)
- 2 red bell peppers (sliced thinly)
- 1 bag matchstick carrots (10 oz.)
- 3 Tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce (or liquid aminos)
- 1 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar
- salt (to taste)
- black pepper (to taste)

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat sesame oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add red onion, cook 2-3 minutes. Add garlic and ginger. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add ground pork and Sriracha. Cook and crumble until pork is cooked to 160° F, about 7-10 minutes.
2. Add coleslaw mix, red bell pepper, carrots, soy sauce, sesame oil, rice wine vinegar, black pepper, and salt, to taste, and stir until well combined. Cook, stirring occasionally, until cabbage is tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Spoon pork-cabbage mixture in to a serving bowl. Drizzle with sauce of choice and garnish, if desired.

*Optional for garnish:* sliced green onions, sesame seeds, wonton strips.

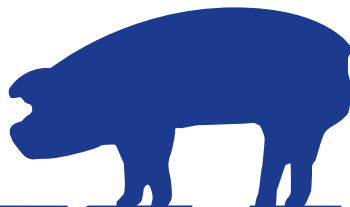
*Optional sauces:* hoisin or duck sauce, sriracha, hot sauce, or sweet chili garlic sauce. For a creamy sauce, mix together Greek yogurt, sriracha, lime juice and salt to taste.





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