

Valentina Bongiorno, PhD

Animal Behavior and Welfare, Department of Poultry Science, Auburn University
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SUMMARY

I am a firm believer in conscious, responsible, and ethical science, and a highly motivated postdoctoral researcher in animal behavior. My goal is to improve animal welfare by translating animals' needs into a language we can comprehend through behavioral observation, while also providing support to producers and industry manufacturers. I currently work with laying hens in commercial farms and have a background in poultry production performance and the conservation of local poultry breeds.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor - Animal Behavior and Welfare

Department of Poultry Science, Auburn University (AL), United States

09/2026 – Present

- Lead an independent research program in poultry behavior and well-being, with emphasis on behavioral, physiological, and production-related outcomes.
- Develop externally funded research projects in poultry welfare, management, and early-life development.
- Teach undergraduate and graduate courses in poultry science, animal welfare, and applied animal behavior.
- Mentor graduate and undergraduate students in research design, behavioral data collection, analysis, and scientific communication.
- Establish interdisciplinary and industry collaborations in poultry production and welfare research.
- Develop peer-reviewed publications from ongoing and existing experimental datasets.
- Contribute to departmental teaching, research, service, and multistate research activities.

Research Associate - Animal Behavior and Welfare

Department of Animal Science, Michigan State University (MI), United States

05/2024 – 08/2026

- Quantitative analysis of behavioral and production datasets and video-derived measures
- Assessment of behavioral patterns and welfare indicators of laying hens to support poultry industry stakeholders during the transition to cage-free systems
- Development of sampling strategies for animal behavior monitoring and video decoding
- Collaboration with industry partners and extension specialists
- Contribution to externally funded research projects
- Data analysis, scientific writing, and result dissemination
- Contribution to teaching, guest lectures, and mentoring in undergraduate and graduate courses
- Research training for undergraduate students

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/ans/research1/animal-behavior-welfare/index>

Ongoing collaboration with external universities:

Department of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, University of Turin (TO), Italy

05/2024 - Present

- Research Participant – ADVAGROMED Project
Responsible for the design and execution of welfare-, behavior-, and reproduction-related tests and associated data analyses

<https://www.advagromed.com/>

Postdoctoral Fellowship in Poultry Welfare, Behavior and Conservation of Local Breeds

Department of Veterinary Sciences, University of Turin (TO), Italy

11/2023 - 04/2024

- Assessing behavior, welfare, and reproductive performance of insect-fed local chicken breeds
- Evaluation of welfare methods for native breeds reared in organic and free-range production

PhD Student in Conservation of Local Chicken Breeds, Poultry Welfare and Production

Department of Veterinary Sciences, University of Turin (TO), Italy

10/2020 - 10/2023

- Biodiversity conservation and valorization of local chicken breeds - evaluation on production performance, meat and egg quality, animal welfare, gut health
- Evaluation of insects as environmental enrichment and diet supplement on behavior, welfare, and production performance of organic and conventional broiler chickens and local chicken breeds
- Laboratory analyses – organ sampling at slaughter, proximate composition analyses, corticosterone assessment, feather DNA extraction

Professional Qualification in Agronomy and Forestry - Licensed to Practice

Regional Federation of Agronomy and Forestry Doctors of Lombardia, Milan (MI), Italy

11/2019

Master's Degree in Science and Technology of Animal Production

University of Milan, Lodi (LO), Italy

10/2017 - 10/2019

- Thesis: "In ovo vaccination practice and chick embryo mortality"
- Final Grade: 110/110 with honors

Bachelor's Degree in Breeding and Animal Welfare

University of Milan, Milan (MI), Italy

10/2014 - 10/2017

- Thesis: "Calf management in dairy farms"
- Final Grade: 110/110 with honors

High School Diploma in Agriculture and Animal Sciences

I.I.S. G. Bonfantini, Novara (NO), Italy

09/2009 - 06/2014

- Final Grade: 100/100.

FUNDED GRANTS

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

06/2026 – 05/2028

Funding agency: Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture (M-AAA); \$150,000

Project: “How does changing vertical paths or nest enclosure impact floor eggs and movement of cage-free hens?”.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Siegford

Co-Principal Investigators: Dr. Bongiorno, Dr. Czerniawski

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

06/2025 – 05/2027

Funding agency: Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture (M-AAA); \$149,931

Project: “Effects of Nest Enclosure and Lighting on Floor Eggs and Hens' Movement in Cage-Free Aviary”.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Siegford

ON-FARM AND INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Animal Care and Facility Supervisor

Avian Conservation Centre for Local Genetic Resources, University of Turin, Carmagnola (TO), Italy
10/2020 – 04/2024

- In charge of animal welfare, husbandry, and daily management of local chicken breeds and breeding facilities

Industrial Hatchery Intern - Embryo Mortality Evaluation due to In “Ovo” Vaccination Practice

Aglietto Natura S.R.L., Bianzè (VC), Italy
05/2019 - 09/2019

- Embryo mortality evaluation
- Classifying unhatched eggs, collecting and analyzing data

Dairy Farm Intern - Management and Welfare Evaluation of Dairy Calves

Allevatori Conduttori Agricoli S.S., Bellinzago (NO), Italy
12/2016 - 02/2017

- Dairy calf care and management
- Assisting in milking practice

INTERNATIONAL MULTISPECIES RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Trainee

University of California Davis, Davis (CA), United States
01/2023 - 06/2023

- Reproductive Behavior of Pekin Ducks in Commercial Farms
- Animal Behavior and Welfare Training: multispecies training, sampling procedures and data analysis
<https://makagon.faculty.ucdavis.edu/members/>

Research Trainee

Inagro vzw, Ieperseweg, Rumbeke-Beitem, Belgium
02/2022 - 05/2022

- Insect Management, Data Collection, and Experiment Execution (Black Soldier Fly, Mealworm, Cricket)
<https://inagro.be/eng>

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Guest lecture - Course ANS 890 – Future goals and opportunities: balance between professional and personal life

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States
09/2025

Content: Group table to identify key aspects for setting future goals and strategies for managing stressors
Audience: Graduate students

Student laboratory practice - Course ANS 252 - Introduction to Management of Avian Species

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States
03/2025

Content: Demonstration and hands-on chicken to learn how to perform blood sampling collection
Audience: Undergraduate students

Guest Lecture - Course ANS 252 - Introduction to Management of Avian Species

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

02/2025

Content: Introduction to poultry welfare and behavior: recognition and assessment

Audience: Undergraduate students

Student laboratory practice - Course ANS 252 - Introduction to Management of Avian Species

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

02/2025

Content: Demonstration and hands-on chicken: how to perform behavioral tests and welfare evaluations

Audience: Undergraduate students

Seminar - Guest Lecture - Introduction to Animal Welfare and Behavior

University of Pisa, Pisa (PI), Italy

03/2024

Content: Overview of poultry behavior and welfare and introduction to behavioral research in poultry

Audience: Master's students

Seminar - Guest Lecture - Measuring Behaviors in Poultry

University of Cuneo, Cuneo (CN), Italy

10/2023

Content: Introduction to animal behavior, animal welfare practices, and research application

Audience: Masters' students

EXTENSION, OUTREACH, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Attendant, International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE)

Atlanta, Georgia (GA), United States

Engaged with poultry producers, manufacturers, veterinarians, and industry stakeholders to identify current production, welfare, and management challenges and to inform the development of applied, industry-driven research objectives.

Postdocs Representative Office of Culture, Access and Belonging

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

Academic year 2025-2026

Content: Contributing to diversity and inclusion initiatives

Audience: Postdoctoral scholars and university community

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/ocab/>

Animal Science Undergraduate Research Forum

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

04/2025

Content: Served as a judge for undergraduate presentation sessions

Audience: Undergraduate students

Student Engagement - Course ANS 101 Professional Development

Michigan State University, East Lansing (MI), United States

11/2024 and 03/2025

Content: Interviews for students for professional development orientation: sharing professional experience and advice

Audience: Undergraduate students

Winter Symposium - Michigan Allied Poultry Industries

Hudsonville (MI), United States (from Michigan State University)

02/2025

Content: Dissemination of results on aviary-enclosed laying hens' behavioral performance in commercial farms - oral presentation

Audience: Producers and poultry manufacturers

Research Products Dissemination to Preserve and Promote Local Chicken Breed Rearing

Avian Conservation Centre for Local Genetic Resources of the University of Turin, Carmagnola (TO), Italy
2022 - 2024

Content: Introduction to poultry production: connecting new generations to the origin of animal food products
- oral communication and hands-on-animal practice

Audience: elementary, middle, and high school students

Workshop: Native chicken breeds to sustain women's freedom in Tunisia

Tunis - Tabarka - Jendouba - Sousa, Tunisia

11/2023

Content: Workshop to improve women's conditions and promote independence through chicken production.

Audience: Local communities and universities throughout Tunisia

<https://sustavianfeed.eu/>

Regional Meeting with Poultry Producers - Application of Research Results on Poultry Farms

University of Turin, (TO), Italy

12/2022

Content: Composition and Quality of Local Poultry Meat: Focus on Marketing Strategies to Valorize Meat and Meat Products - oral presentation

Audience: Producers

[Websites](#) [Covarap Project](#)

Slow Food Event - Terra Madre 2022

Parco Dora, Turin (TO), Italy

09/2022

Content: Promotion of awareness and knowledge on Italian chicken breeds and derived food specialties

Audience: Community

<https://www.slowfood.com/events/terra-madre/>

Game of Research - 2021 Edition

University of Turin, (TO), Italy

12/2021

Content: Use of live larvae in poultry nutrition – oral presentation

Audience: Students, faculty, staff, community members

AWARDS

Quebec, Canada

06/2022

Insects to Feed the World Conference

Award Best Oral Presentation, Student Category - Slaughtering performance and meat quality of medium-growing chicken fed black soldier fly live larvae

SELECTED PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- **Bongiorno, V., Ali, A. B., Robison, C. I., Siegford, J. M. (2026).** Restricting laying hens' litter access leads to a rebound effect in wing flapping and dust bathing behavior. Poultry Science, 106907.

- Ma, X., Ambike, V., **Bongiorno, V.**, Jacobs, J. A., Swanson, J. C., Widowski, T. M., Siegford, J. M. (2026). Fowl play: Do age and aviary design affect play in cage-free laying hens?. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 298, 106960.
- **Bongiorno V.**, Grebey, T., Swanson, J., Widowski, T., Siegford, J. (2025). Unflappable: Wing flapping of aviary-housed laying hens following spatial restriction. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 106830. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2025.106830>.
- Grebey T., **Bongiorno V.**, Han J., Steibel J., Siegford J.M. (2025). Maximum vertical height during wing flapping of laying hens captured with a depth camera. *PLoS ONE* 20(3): e0312656. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0312656>.
- **Bongiorno V.**, Fiorilla E., Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E.E., Bergagna S., Manenti I., Macchi E., Gai F., Schiavone A. (2025). New horizons in live and dehydrated black soldier fly larvae usage: Behavioral and welfare implications in “Bianca di Saluzzo” cockerels. *PLoS ONE* 20(2): e0318793. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0318793>.
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E. E., Biasato I., Renna M., Gasco L., Bergagna S., Manenti I., Macchi E., Gai F., Schiavone A. (2024). Organic medium-growing chickens fed live black soldier fly larvae: a welfare improvement study. *J. Anim. Physiol. Anim. Nutr.* 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpn.13997>.
- Bellezza Oddon S., Rossi G., **Bongiorno V.**, Gasco L., Ojha S., Rastello L., Renna M., Rossi Ribeiro L., Sandrock C., Schlüter O.K., Biasato I. (2025). Chapter author: Behavioral welfare assessment methodology and protocol standardization for poultry. In: *BugBook: Advancing insect utilization for food and feed*. *Journal of Insects as Food and Feed*, 1(aop), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1163/23524588-bja10224>.
- Cappone E. E., Hoş E., Fiorilla E., Ozella L., Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Franco R., **Bongiorno V.**, Stoppani N., Sola D., Soglia D., Rantsiou K., Schiavone A. (2025). Multidimensional characterization of phenotypic traits in three slow-growing native chicken breeds. *Italian Journal of Animal Science*, 24(1), 2389–2403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1828051X.2025.2580719>.
- Bellezza Oddon S., Biasato I., Ferrocino I., Imarisio A., Renna M., Caimi C., Gariglio M., Dabbou S., Pipan M., Dekleva D., Corvaglia M. R., **Bongiorno V.**, Macchi E., Cocolin L., Gasco L., Schiavone A. (2024). Live black soldier fly larvae as environmental enrichment for native chickens: implications for bird performance, welfare, and excreta microbiota. *Animal*, 18(11), 101341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.animal.2024.101341>.
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E. E., Biasato I., Renna M., Forte C., Coudron C., Bergagna S., Gai F., Schiavone A. (2022b). Black soldier fly larvae used for environmental enrichment purposes: Can they affect the growth, slaughter performance, and blood chemistry of medium-growing chickens? *Front. in Vet. Sci.*, 9, 1064017. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.1064017>.

SELECTED CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

- Siegford J., Diez Leon M., **Bongiorno V.**, Elliott V. Wildlife welfare: Centering the conversation around behavioral biology. 59th Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE), Greater Noida (India), August 10–14, 2026 (plenary presentation by Siegford).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Baugh K., Siegford J. Does manipulation of nest enclosure or uniformity of light affect hens’ spatial navigation? 59th Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE), Greater Noida (India), August 10–14, 2026 (oral presentation by Siegford)
- **Bongiorno V.**, Baugh K., Robison C., Siegford J.M. Can hen performance be affected by lighting uniformity and degree of nest enclosure? Poultry Science Association (PSA) Annual Meeting, Toronto, Ontario (Canada), July 10–13, 2026 (oral presentation by Siegford).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Biasato I., Bellezza Oddon S., Loiotine Z., Gasco L., Schiavone A. How do live larvae modulate reproductive performance, welfare, and behavior of dual-purpose

chicken breeders? Insects to Feed the World Congress (IFW), Turin (Italy), June 8-12, 2026 (oral presentation by Bongiorno).

- Biasato I., **Bongiorno V.**, Loiotine Z., Bellezza Oddon S., Passaro R.L., Kießling M., Schilling F., Gai F., Brugiapaglia A., and Gasco L. Live *Tenebrio molitor* larvae as feed ingredient for native chickens: a multi-perspective view on egg quality. 76th Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP), Innsbruck (Austria), August 25-29, 2025 (oral presentation by Biasato).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Widowski T.M., Ali A.B.A., Siegford J.M. Impact of aviary enclosure on wing flapping in cage-free laying hens. 58th Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE). Utrecht, (The Netherlands). August 4-8, 2025 (poster presentation by Bongiorno).
- Ma X., **Bongiorno V.**, Jacobs J., Swanson J., Widowski T., Siegford J.M. Play Behavior in Cage-Free Laying Hens: The Impact of Age and Aviary Design. Guelph (Ontario, Canada). May 14-15, 2025 (poster presentation by Ma).
- Biasato I., Ferrocino I., Fabrikov D., Timea Varga A., **Bongiorno V.**, Bellezza Oddon S., Loiotine Z., Schiavone A., Gasco L. Live yellow mealworm larvae as feed ingredient for native chickens: a focus on gastrointestinal health. Insect Plus, Cloppenburg (Germany), May 12-14, 2025 (oral presentation by Biasato).
- Cappone E.E., **Bongiorno V.**, Fiorilla E., Stoppani N., Gai F., Zambotto V., Soglia D., Gariglio M., Schiavone A. Rediscovering Italian poultry treasures: reviving the Millefiori Piemontese breed. XVI European Poultry Conference Valencia (Spain), June 23-28, 2024 (poster presentation by Cappone).
- Biasato I., Gariglio M., Fiorilla E., **Bongiorno V.**, Cappone E. E., Bellezza Oddon S., Gasco L., Schiavone A. Does the mixture of *Hermetia illucens* and *Tenebrio molitor* meals lead to improved performance in broiler chickens? 74th Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP), Lyon (France), August 26-September 1, 2023 (oral presentation by Biasato).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E.E., Biasato I., Bergagna S., Gai F., Schiavone A. Could the live black soldier fly larvae supplementation affect the welfare of medium-growth chickens? 11th European Symposium of Poultry Welfare (ESPW), Prague, Czech Republic, June 26-29, 2023 (oral presentation by Bongiorno).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E.E., Biasato I., Bellezza Oddon S., Soglia D., Renna M., Gasco L., Gai F., Forte C., Schiavone A. Black Soldier Fly live larvae as environmental enrichment in medium-growing chicken diet. 26th World Poultry Congress (WPC), Paris (France), August 7-11, 2022 (poster presentation).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E.E., Biasato I., Bellezza Oddon S., Kalkan N., Soglia D., Renna M., Gasco L., Coudron C., Gai F., Forte C., Schiavone A. Slaughtering performance of medium-growing chicken fed black soldier fly live larvae. Insects to Feed the World Congress (IFW), Québec (Canada), June 10-16, 2022 (oral presentation by Bongiorno).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Gariglio M., Zambotto V., Cappone E.E., Biasato I., Bellezza Oddon S., Gaddès M., Soglia D., Renna M., Gasco L., Gai F., Forte C., Coudron C., Bergagna S., Dellepiane L., Pagliasso G., Schiavone A. Blood chemistry of medium-growing male and female chickens supplemented black soldier fly live larvae. 7th Mediterranean Poultry Summit (MPS), Córdoba (Spain), June 8–10, 2022 (poster presentation by Bongiorno).
- **Bongiorno V.**, Castellina C., Ferrazzi V., Grilli G. Embryonic mortality in hatching eggs following in ovo vaccination (translated title). SIPA Annual Meeting, 2020 (oral presentation by Grilli; online)

Italian, native

English, professional working proficiency (speaking, writing, reading)

DIGITAL SKILLS

IBM - SPSS Statistics | BORIS | Microsoft Office | Plurimix

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN), University of Minnesota Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) course: “Optimizing the Practice of Mentoring” 2024
 - Coursera: “Programming for Everybody (Getting Started with Python)”. 18 hours, 2024
 - University of Turin: “Grant Writing Workshop from: How to Write a Competitive Application to a Funding Agency”. 35 hours, 2022
 - Wageningen Academy: “Online Summer School Insects as Food and Feed, from producing to consuming” 40 hours, 2021
 - The Floor is Yours: “Webinar: Presenting with Impact”. 1.5 hours, 2021
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Driving License: valid EU and US driving license