

DATA VERSIFY

Rich Meisel



Researcher Background:

Rich Meisel (he/him) is a biologist at the University of Houston. The Meisel lab studies how genetic variation and environmental heterogeneity affect polymorphism within populations and differences across species. His research largely focuses on sex differences, sex chromosome evolution, and the innate immune response to bacterial infection. He does this using a variety of fly species, from the model organism *Drosophila melanogaster* to the insects that are pests of livestock.

Q: How would you describe your science to a 5th grader?

A: I study all the important things in life: how babies get made, how animals fight off infections, and why we get old and die. I do this by studying the DNA inside organisms and doing experiments with animals in my lab.

Q: Why did you become a biologist?

A: I had a great high school biology teacher who got me excited by the interesting questions you could answer by doing science, and biology in particular.

Q: What is your favorite part about your job?

A: Analyzing data. Then trying to write about it, and realized I did the analysis wrong, and then re-analyzing the data. Rinsing and repeating this process ad nauseam.

Q: What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are? A: I didn't get into my first choices for grad school, and I now work at a university with fewer resources available. I overcame these obstacles by thinking creatively and finding other ways to do the work.



Rich checking fruit fly populations and their food supply in his lab.

Q: What are hobbies and/or interests that you have outside of your research?

A: I play ultimate frisbee, explore caves, walk my dogs, and I try to keep my kids from hurting themselves and each other.

Q: What is your favorite thing about ultimate frisbee?

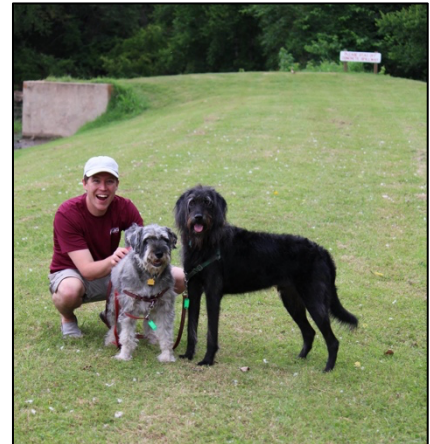
A: I play ultimate because it is fun and great exercise. I also get to play in tournaments against other old men, which makes me feel young :)

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring biologists?

A: Show up and do the work. Being smart helps you be successful, but showing up and doing the work is more important.

Q: What do you believe are key elements that contribute to being successful in biology?

A: Try to be a keen observer. Pay attention to details and never be afraid to ask questions. There are no dumb questions. Biology can be complicated, which can be intimidating, but also exciting because new discoveries are constantly made.



Top: Rich taking his dogs for a walk.
Bottom: Rich wedged in a cave passage.