

SPRING 2018

# HEIFER NOTES

Growing Our Future™



# DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION



## 5 reasons to attend the DCHA Conference

Register now for annual conference set for April 10-12



Elizabeth Quinn

Learn how to take your calf and heifer program to the next step on the podium by attending the 2018 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) annual conference. With the theme “One team. Gold dreams.” the conference is set for April 10-12 in Milwaukee, Wis.

“The DCHA conference focuses on calves and heifers — our future,” says Elizabeth Quinn, DCHA board of directors. “It is important for me to stay up to date on current herd health practices and protocols presented at the conference. Being current with industry standards helps us finetune our operation.”

Here are five reasons why you should attend:

### 1. LEARN ABOUT HOT TOPICS

Breakout sessions will cover a wide range of hot topics including: calf immunity, group housing, ventilation systems, managing employees, feed center management, feedlot management and cattle transportation. Topics are identified based on last year’s attendee feedback and industry trends. Learn from the best in the business.

### 2. EXPERIENCE FARM AND INDUSTRY TOURS

Tours will focus on several areas of calf and heifer management. Attendees can

attend one of two industry tours, and will conclude the day by meeting on-farm for a calf management walk-through:

#### Industry tours (choose one):

**STgenetics** STgenetics: A leader in bovine genetics, you will get a glimpse into the research and technology that supports the growing industry. Hear from the experts on the latest in genomic testing and sexing technology.

**Milk Products** Milk Products: A behind-the-scenes tour of milk replacer manufacturing. Learn about the research and expertise that goes into calf milk replacer, and milk replacer for a variety of species.

#### Farm tour:

**Vir-Clar Farms** Exceptional calf care protocols and cleanliness are key to calf management success on this 2,000-cow dairy. Hear from the dairy’s calf manager, Katie Grinstead, about their approach to getting calves and heifers off to the best start possible.

### 3. GET AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Learn how to use influence and integrity to inspire and engage others. Regardless of your role on-farm or in the industry, great leadership is the driving force behind your growing business. Learn more about “The Power of Influence” through keynote speaker, Ty Bennett.

### 4. NETWORK WITH YOUR PEERS

Network with other calf and heifer raisers from across the U.S. and world. All aspects of calf and heifer raising will be represented at the conference. Take time to learn from your peers during meals, between sessions or during evening social events.

### 5. ENJOY A NEW LOCATION

This year’s new conference location in Milwaukee, Wis. makes for easy travel arrangements. All conference activities will be held at the Potawatomi Hotel and Casino, except the industry and farm tours.

“The DCHA conference brings together some of the best in the industry,” says Quinn. “It is where I learn new ideas, procedures and products from one year to the next. These learnings come not only from presenters but also from fellow conference attendees.”

### CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Last year’s conference drew more than 600 dairy calf and heifer raisers, dairy farmers and allied industry professionals from 30 states and 10 countries, representing more than 2 million cattle.

### REGISTER

For more information about the 2018 DCHA Conference or to become a member visit [www.calfandheifer.org](http://www.calfandheifer.org), call (855) 400-3242 or email [info@calfandheifer.org](mailto:info@calfandheifer.org).

## Why DCHA?

### JAKE TULS

“I really enjoy the camaraderie with everybody and learning from each other.”

– Hereford, TX

### KAYLA FRANKEN

“The value I find in having a DCHA membership is that we can learn a lot from people from the U.S. and the world. I get a lot of great connections attending the conference.”

– Sutherland, IA

### STEFANIE FIECK

“DCHA has benefited our business by giving us the opportunity to connect with our customers, calf raisers, so we can understand their needs to provide them with real solutions.”

– Chilton, WI

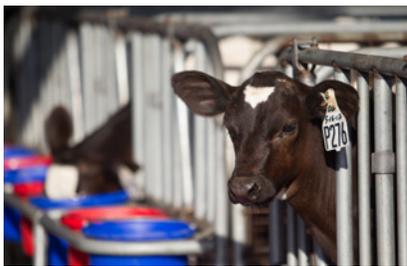


## ONE TEAM. GOLD DREAMS.

APRIL 10-12, 2018  
MILWAUKEE, WI

► Register: [calfandheifer.org](http://calfandheifer.org)

# Reduce stress to boost calf survival rates



Reaching benchmark goals for calf survival rates is critical to decreasing costs and improving productivity and your bottom line.

The DCHA Gold Standard for early survival rates is greater than 97 percent 24 to 60 days after birth.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the average mortality rate for preweaned calves is about 7.8 percent on U.S. dairies.<sup>2</sup> That means nearly all operations can make improvements in this area.

First, operations should reduce, or eliminate, the main causes of stress for calves, including:

- Abrupt feed changes
- Poor ventilation
- Overcrowding
- Exposure to sudden weather changes
- Excessive heat or cold

Producers should also carefully transport, vaccinate and handle pre-weaned calves to reduce the stress associated with these events.

Next, a healthy and balanced digestive system can support a calf's overall immune system. One way to do this is to include an active dry yeast (ADY) probiotic to the milk replacer, raw or waste milk fed to preweaned

calves. ADY probiotics containing *Saccharomyces cerevisiae boulardii* CNCM I-1079 have been proven to positively support a calf's immune system. It helps influence the calf's natural immune response through an internal active process in the lower gut.

Probiotics like *S. c. boulardii* CNCM I-1079 can positively support the calf during times of stress which can damage their productivity potential. However, not every probiotic can deliver these effects, particularly in pre-weaned calves. Producers should look for specific strains that are proven to deliver results.

*Information provided by Andy Skidmore, DVM, Ph.D., Lallemand Animal Nutrition, DCHA sponsor.*

<sup>1</sup> Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Gold Standards, Second Edition.

<sup>2</sup> USDA, 2010, Dairy 2007, Heifer Calf Health and Management Practices on U.S. Dairy Operations, 2007 USDA:APHIS:VS, CEAH, Fort Collins, CO #550.0110.

# Focus on feeding heifers for cost efficiency

By *Tamilee Nennich, DCHA Board Member*



Tamilee Nennich

Calves and heifers need nutrients to grow. Although this statement may seem like common knowledge, applying it to calf and heifer programs is not as easy as it sounds.

Nutrients are valuable, which means it costs money to feed additional nutrients. Whether the nutrients come in the form of milk replacer, calf starter, minerals or forages, they all come at a cost. Raising heifers in a cost-effective manner requires a focus on strategies to reduce the costs per pound of gain instead of only paying attention to daily feed costs. Here are three areas of focus to achieve cost efficiency with your heifers:

## 1. CALVES NEED MORE NUTRIENTS TO GROW FASTER.

Growth and average daily gain are based primarily on how much energy and protein the calf is consuming. Calves need to consume large amounts of nutrients to achieve growth rates outlined in the Gold Standards of doubling birth weight by weaning and being 55 percent of their mature weight at first breeding.

One of the challenges to getting calves to consume enough nutrients is intake. Young calves will only consume a small amount of solid feed and may not always consume enough nutrients to maintain or achieve target growth rates.

## 2. FEED EFFICIENCY IS NOT THE SAME FOR ALL FEEDS CONSUMED.

The digestibility and availability of nutrients can vary greatly for different feeds. For example, the nutrients in milk



are much more readily available to a calf for growth than the nutrients in calf starter. Therefore, if a calf consumes 1 pound of milk, it will have much better feed conversion than a calf consuming 1 pound of high-quality starter grain.

Similarly, feeding grain results in improved feed efficiency per pound of gain as compared to feeding forages. The efficiency of growth for different feeds is especially important to keep in mind when it comes to post-weaned and growing heifers. The complication is that feeds which are typically less efficient from a feed efficiency standpoint are often less expensive. Low-efficiency feeds are why it's important to know your cost per pound of gain.

For example, let's say we have two heifers eating 12 pounds of feed per day. Heifer A is fed a diet that allows her to gain 1.8 pounds per day and costs \$160 per ton. Heifer B eats the same amount of feed, but a higher quality diet with greater digestibility and nutrient concentration allowing her to gain 2 pounds per day. Even if the diet for Heifer B costs \$175 per ton, it will be less expensive (\$0.533/

lb gain for Heifer A as compared to \$0.525/lb gain for Heifer B) to feed the heifers to the target breeding size of 55 percent of their mature body weight.

## 3. AGE DOES MATTER.

Heifers do not grow at the same rate throughout the growing period. Younger heifers can grow frame and increase muscle growth more quickly than older heifers. Once heifers reach puberty, the rate at which they can increase frame growth slows down tremendously. Because of this natural growth curve, taking advantage of opportunities to increase growth rates early in a heifer's life can be advantageous for both the overall growth rate and cost-effectiveness to achieve each pound of gain.

Raising heifers is a balance between nutrition and economics. Heifers need to be fed a ration that provides them enough nutrients to keep them growing and healthy. But, the costs to achieve those gains are also an important consideration. Using diets and feeding strategies to reduce the cost per pound of gain plays a valuable role in developing an efficient dairy heifer growth program.

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*Heifer Notes is published quarterly by the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association and distributed to all DCHA members and associated organizations through a partnership with Hoard's Dairyman.*