5 reasons to attend the DCHA Conference

Register now for annual conference set for April 10–12

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 and milk 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:

   - Workshops (choose one):
     - 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: 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 farm’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, call (855) 400-3242 or email info@calfandheifer.org.

Elizabeth Quinn

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
Focus on feeding heifers for cost efficiency

By Tamilee Nennich, DCHA Board Member

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 foods 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 ($0.525/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 these 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.