More than 300 dairy calf and heifer growers and industry representatives, representing more than 500,000 cattle, met for the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) 2014 Annual Conference. The conference lineup included: interactive educational seminars for both farm managers and employees, an inside look at industry-leading dairy operations and a keynote presentation from renowned leader and Green Bay Packers’ all-time leading receiver Donald Driver.

“The conference was an exciting event for our organization and our industry,” says Jack Banker, DCHA President and owner of Scenic-View Farms in Black Creek, Wis. “Calf and heifer growers from across the country pored in the excitement of the renewed vision of DCHA by sharing their experiences and learning new management strategies. The success of the conference is a testament to our organization’s future strength – a future that we are very excited about.”

The annual conference was planned and hosted by dairy producers with new avenues of industry education. Through a mix of classroom and on-farm sessions, industry experts shared management strategies and expertise on topics, including: calf health, housing, silage quality, team management, sanitation, ventilation, forage testing and audits, manure management, genomics, federal policy and much more.

“The new conference format helped calf and heifer growers to see strategies that are working on successful facilities and to talk with the managers about what is working well and challenges they have overcome,” says Vickie Franken, 2014 conference committee chair and owner of City View Farms near Sutherland, Iowa.

Rounding out the event was a keynote address by Donald Driver, who commended the producers in attendance for being champions in the agriculture industry.

“You are all leaders and you are all here for a reason,” Driver said. “The reason is to be successful, learn new tricks and trades and make the impossible, possible. Because of the people, DCHA has been around for 18 years and it won’t go away as long as you believe in it.”

Additional highlights included: a trade show focused on calf and heifer products and services and facility tours at Calf Source, a 10,000-head calf facility in DePere, Wis., which recently invested more than $2 million in facility and system upgrades, a stop at Green Valley Dairy, a family-owned operation in Krakow, Wis., that received the 2014 Outstanding Achievement in Renewable Energy by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy; a tour of Genex Cooperative, Inc.’s bull housing and semen collection facility in Shawano, Wis., that houses 378 bulls and employs 15 staff members; and a visit to Synergy Dairy, a Red & White Holstein facility in Pulaski, Wis., that recently built a new heifer housing facility, allowing the managers to bring their previously custom-raised heifers back to the farm.

Make plans to join DCHA for the 2015 conference, set for March 30-April 1, 2015 in Madison, Wis.
Experts cover wide variety of topics at DCHA Conference

Dr. Ryan Leiterman of VENTILATION: disease, a problem which can reduce a demonstration, Olson shared strategies on delivering milk to their calves, said Dr. Skip Olson of Digi-Star. A hands-on demonstration content instantaneously for quicker ration measuring were shared by Chris Horton of these policies on the dairy industry.

Dr. Duane Wachhols, professor emeritus of animal science at the University of River Falls, Van Rossum’s ability to apply what she learns in the classroom at the University of River Falls and apply it outside of the classroom bodes well for her future contributions in the dairy industry, says Dr. Duane Wachhols, professor emeritus of animal science at the University of River Falls. A junior at the University of River Falls Van Rossum is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science with a Meat Animal emphasis and a science option, along with a minor in chemistry. After graduation, Van Rossum plans to pursue a career as a nutritionist and hopes to one day manage a calf operation focusing on dairy beef or wall calves.

Van Rossum awarded $1,000 scholarship

A strong desire to learn is one of the many strengths that Lee Van Rossum, the 2014 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association scholarship recipient embodies. Van Rossum’s ability to apply what she learns in the classroom at the University of River Falls and apply it outside of the classroom bodes well for her future contributions in the dairy industry, says Dr. Duane Wachhols, professor emeritus of animal science at the University of River Falls. A junior at the University of River Falls Van Rossum is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science with a Meat Animal emphasis and a science option, along with a minor in chemistry. After graduation, Van Rossum plans to pursue a career as a nutritionist and hopes to one day manage a calf operation focusing on dairy beef or wall calves.

Currently, Van Rossum is employed as a calf feeder at Jacobs Brothers in Greenleaf, Wis., where she assists in feeding 300 dairy beef calves’ milk and grain. In addition, Van Rossum assists with calf health, dehorning, banding and ear-tagging. “I look forward to participating in events and programs that the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association sponsors,” says Van Rossum. “I also look forward to reading new research and learning about new techniques that will help improve calf management and the dairy industry. I am excited to learn from the DCHA as well as possibly one day sharing any research I may have completed with the DCHA and passing this information along to future generations of farmers.”

FROM THE FIELD:

Debbie Schulte

“As a hard manager on our 650 cow farm and assisting with the calves, we are considering changing our housing and feeding system for calves from birth through about 4 months of age. I was interested in attending the different farm tour stops at the conference to gain some information on housing, and particularly the group feeding of calves. There is a lot of new technology and it sounds fascinating. It also sounds like it would be more labor-saving, so I wanted a chance to gain more information on those topics.

The different educational sessions were very good. I particularly enjoyed Tom Wall, who talked about employee management. The producer panels where we could communicate back and forth with the panelists, ask questions and kind of moderate the sessions ourselves were excellent. Overall, it was a conference that I could gain more education and learn new things, and I found it very interesting and educational.”

-Debbie Schulte, L&R Dairy, Smithville, OH