

WINTER 2014-2015

# HEIFER NOTES

Growing Our Future™



# DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION

## CONNECT with the BEST

### 2015 DCHA Conference



## Annual conference set for March 31-April 1

*Conference brings continued educational and networking opportunities to farm managers and employees.*

The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) will host its annual conference March 31-April 1, 2015 at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton, Wis. Themed “Connect with the Best” – this year’s conference is sure to be one of the best networking opportunities for everyone involved in the calf and heifer industry.

“Some of the best connections I’ve made in the industry have been through the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association,” says Vickie Franken, owner of City View Farms, near Sioux Center, Iowa and 2015 conference committee co-chair. “We’re excited to offer that opportunity, as well as educational sessions that everyone can learn from.”

#### THIS YEAR’S CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS WILL INCLUDE:

- Presentations, producer panels and hands-on demonstrations
- Unique speakers and fresh perspectives
- Networking with producers and industry leaders
- A trade show specifically focused towards the calf and heifer industry
- The annual DCHA business meeting
- Pre-conference tour and lab demonstrations at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL) and the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine (UW SVM) on March 30

Unique to this year’s conference, a pre-conference tour will be offered featuring presentations and hands-on labs on calf respiratory scoring, ultrasound imaging of the calf thorax, pharyngeal swabbing and other diagnostic tests at the WVDL and UW SVM. This session will be limited to members only. You

can sign up or renew your DCHA membership at [www.calfandheifer.org](http://www.calfandheifer.org).

“I’m excited to be serving as the co-chair for the upcoming conference”, says Tamilee Nennich, Associate Professor, Purdue Department of Animal Science. “The conference committee has been collaborating to develop an agenda that includes calf and heifer management strategies, new industry technologies, employee management sessions, producer roundtables, hands-on demonstrations, farm tours and unmatched networking opportunities.”

Custom heifer raisers, dairy producers, veterinarians, nutritionists and anyone with a vested interest in raising calves is invited to attend the upcoming conference.

Additional conference information as well as event registration will soon be available online at [www.calfandheifer.org](http://www.calfandheifer.org). Sponsorship opportunities are also available for this can’t miss event; information can be requested by emailing [info@calfandheifer.org](mailto:info@calfandheifer.org).

## MEMBER BENEFITS OVERVIEW

Renew your membership today to receive benefits through 2015! Don’t forget to encourage your fellow producers and colleagues to take advantage of becoming a member.

#### AS A MEMBER OF DCHA, YOU CAN EXPECT:

- **INFORMATION**, that is unbiased, for those with a vested interest in the calf and heifer segment of our industry.
- **NETWORKING** opportunities to learn from other calf and heifer raisers and industry professionals.
- **PERFORMANCE** and sustainability of calf and heifer raising from timely and accurate information and technology.
- **INVOLVEMENT** in and access to the DCHA Gold Standards for calf and heifer raising programs.
- **LEADERSHIP** and management skill building opportunities.
- **CONNECTIONS** that count when it comes to research, product development, services and expertise you need or can offer others.
- **COMMITMENT** to enhancing the expertise, collaboration and success of all managers, employees and producers.

## Join the conversation online

Dairy Calf and Heifer Association members are sharing tips and calf management strategies online through our social media channels. Join the conversation today on Facebook and Twitter.

#### FACEBOOK HIGHLIGHT

We recently asked members what their top calf care tips are on Facebook. This image shows the top tips provided by our followers.

Have something to add? Like us on Facebook and Twitter to comment and stay up-to-date on the latest industry and association happenings: [www.facebook.com/calfandheifer](http://www.facebook.com/calfandheifer) or [www.twitter.com/calfandheifer](http://www.twitter.com/calfandheifer).



# Winter calf barn ventilation 101

*Many calf barns rely on natural ventilation to provide clean, fresh air to calf pens. But, as the weather cools down and winter approaches, there can be a tendency to close the doors, windows and curtains on the calf barn in an effort to reduce drafts.*



Preventing cold air from blowing on calves can help keep calves warm, but when buildings are closed proper air exchange to keep calves healthy through the winter months can be prohibited.

“If you fail to get good ventilation or adequate air exchange in calf barns, you get a build-up of dust, pathogens and moisture in the air,” says Gary Geisler, calf and heifer specialist with DCHA Sponsor, Purina Animal Nutrition. “A build-up of ammonia can occur and cause irritation to the respiratory system of calves.”

Geisler cautions that if close attention is not paid to ventilation, a breakout of pneumonia or another respiratory disease could occur. Symptoms that might indicate a respiratory infection include: coughing, nasal discharge and watery eyes.

## PREVENT MICROENVIRONMENTS

The goal for wintertime ventilation is to have a minimum of four interior air exchanges per hour in calf barns, which can be provided by a positive pressure ventilation system. A well-designed system will deliver fresh air to the immediate environment of the calf without creating a draft.

“A positive pressure ventilation system supplies fresh, outside air into the calf barn and distributes the air evenly throughout the barn,” says Geisler. “In barns with individual calf pens this is especially important because the system is designed to move air into “dead spots” – areas where the air may be stagnant, such as between solid calf pen panels. Stagnant air can harbor airborne pathogens.”

Positive pressure ventilation systems when designed properly can run 24 hours per day, even in cold weather.

## PROPER PLANNING IS CRITICAL

While positive pressure ventilation systems can be a great solution for providing air exchange throughout your barn, Geisler cautions that these systems are “not one size fits all.”

“Positive pressure ventilation systems should be designed based on the number of calves, size of building, dimensions of the barn, layout of the calf pens and more,” says Geisler. “It takes precise planning to achieve even distribution of air throughout the facility, but no drafts.”

There is a fine line between providing adequate ventilation and creating drafts. Geisler recommends dairy producers do their homework, to not cut corners and to work with the experts when investing in a positive pressure ventilation system.

The Dairyland Initiative, a University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine outreach program, provides resources that can assist dairy producers in properly planning a ventilation system. A list of trained designed consultants throughout the U.S., Canada and beyond can be found online at <http://thedairylandinitiative.vetmed.wisc.edu>.

## OTHER WINTERTIME FACTORS TO CONSIDER

There are a variety of other management practices that can be implemented during cool weather months in group housing settings to help calves thrive.

These practices can include:

- Making sure each calf has 30-35 square feet of resting space.
- Having 5-6 inches of packed bedding between the floor and the calf.
- Bedding with deep, clean, dry straw that calves can nestle in.
- Providing calf jackets as needed.
- Using pens with an open front and back, with solid panels in between. An open wire panel may be used between no more than two neighboring calves to provide social interaction.
- Increasing milk solids by ½ to ¾ of a pound, recommended as a third feeding.

“To help calves thrive in winter serious consideration should be given to each of these additional management factors, but if you are faced with a ventilation issue don’t be fooled into thinking any single piece is the solution,” says Geisler. Attention must also be given to transition cow and colostrum management to ensure newborn calves are well-equipped with passive immunity to fight off disease.

“In the grand scheme of things, the investment in your ventilation system should be worth every penny saved in reduced antibiotic and veterinary expenses required to treat respiratory disease and other health issues,” says Geisler. “It’s not an area worth sacrificing on, particularly when the answer could be as simple as a low cost ventilation tube.”

## FROM THE FIELD: Lowell Metzger

“As members of DCHA, the biggest benefit for us is the networking. It’s great to learn about other producers and get to know them better. It’s good for us to learn about how they’re operating and what they are doing to be successful.

It’s also great to learn the goals others have for their operations, and finding out how our goals stand with the goals

of these other producers. We’re very happy to see there is value in some of the goals we have. Another great thing is getting to know people at the conference trade show and learning what’s out there for us to use.”

-Lowell Metzger, Metzger Farm Claypool, IN



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