At the conference we were able to take away many functional learnings, from silage tend, and we look forward to attending again in 2015,” said Santiago.

Ricardo and Santiago Gallo, Queretaro, Mexico, first heard about the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) from member Jose Ahedo, Spain, who pointed out that DCHA was a great way to learn about the industry. After doing some website research, the Gallo brothers decided to attend the 2014 DCHA Conference in Green Bay, Wis., and it was a decision they would never regret.

Santiago recalls that he and his brother split up during the sessions to take in as much information as possible. They connected with some of the session speakers, took advantage of networking opportunities outside of the sessions and learned about the new technologies featured in the trade show.

“It was extremely useful for us to attend, and we look forward to attending again in 2015,” said Santiago.

The information the Gallo brothers collected helped them make the decision to start their own farm.

“At the conference we were able to take away many functional learnings, from silage techniques to heifer health,” said Santiago.

“But another thing we took away, which was very important for us, was the inspiration and emotional drive to open our own operation.”

Their farm, Crianza Estrella de Xalpa, started raising heifers in September 2014 after a year and a half of planning. Currently in phase one of their business plan, the operation custom raises heifers up to calving. Phase two includes launching a calf raising operation, with the final phase and ultimate goal being to become a full-scale calf to cow operation.

“Today, we are very proud to raise heifers for one farm that believed in and trusted us,” said Santiago.

The Gallo’s raise heifers for La Virgen, the Armando Schievenini family; a very prestigious dairy farm in Mexico according to Santiago. However, that won’t stop them from expanding their current phase to custom raise more heifers.

“We are actively looking to expand our current operation and invite more customers to benefit from our knowledge and service,” said Santiago.

The operation started with just 14 Holsteins, but has expanded up to 50.

“We know that it’s a small number when compared to other operations, but it’s a start and we’re very proud of it,” said Santiago.

“We knew we had to start small since we didn’t have the capital to start a large scale operation. Rome was not built in one day!”

They helped us by sharing important insights on reproduction, nutrition, human resources and most importantly sharing a burning passion to succeed in the heifer raising business.”

Santiago will tell you DCHA was truly instrumental in making the dream of starting their own farm become reality.

“We believed DCHA could help us with the experience and connections we didn’t have, and it really came to fruition as we learned a great deal from the 2014 conference,” said Santiago. “Talking with other heifer raisers, asking questions, connecting with other members and visiting member farms surrounding the conference all contributed to where we are today.”

“DCHA members helped us tremendously, and all of them gave us access to their operations and insights,” said Santiago. “We are extremely thankful to the farms that hosted us – City View Farms, Cameron Heifer Ranch and Aurora Organic Dairy – and their owners and managers for being great mentors.”

“They helped us by sharing important insights on reproduction, nutrition, human resources and most importantly sharing a burning passion to succeed in the heifer raising business.”

To learn more about Crianza Estrella de Xalpa, visit www.estrelladexalpa.com or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CrianzaEstrella. To take advantage of a DCHA membership, visit www.calfandheifer.org. You can also interact with DCHA on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CalfandHeifer and follow @CalfandHeifer on Twitter.

Renew your membership today to guarantee savings on the 2015 Conference! 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.
Combat procedural drift with 4colostrum management refreshers

Procedural drift is defined as a mismatch between procedures or rules and actual practice, and it happens more often than you think on a dairy farm.

One area where procedural drift can have a particularly adverse effect is with colostrum management for newborn calves. The importance of newborn calf health is obvious, but what may be less obvious is how your colostrum management practices have shifted or changed in the last few weeks, months or even years.

It's a good idea to complete a comparison of what's actually being done versus what has been outlined in the past. Perhaps things have changed for the better, and policies need updating. Or perhaps things have gone downhill, and it's time to get back to the outlined policy. In any case, taking a hard look at your colostrum management program can help ensure your calves are getting off to the best start possible.

Make sure your colostrum management program, and your calves, have not suffered from procedural drift. Work with your veterinarian or animal health specialist to refine your protocols and give your calves the best start possible.

Management tip provided by Bobbi Brockmann of DCHA Sponsor, ImmuCell. Visit www.immucell.com for more information.

1. QUALITY AND QUANTITY ARE KEY. Calves should consume at least four quarts of a high-quality colostrum to receive adequate protection. If colostrum quality or quantity is in question, a colostrum replacer or supplement should be considered.

2. TIMING IS EVERYTHING. As we know, calves start to lose the ability to absorb antibodies at six hours of age and generally can no longer absorb them at 24 hours. A delay in consumption of colostrum puts a calf’s health in jeopardy.

3. ANTIBODY LEVELS are not guaranteed by the cow. There are no guarantees when it comes to how many antibodies will be transferred from the bloodstream of the cow to the mammary system. Pre-calving vaccination protocols can help elevate the amount of antibodies within the bloodstream, but they can't be guaranteed either. The immune response of the cow plays a role in determining the potential antibodies available.

4. COLOSTRUM DOES NOT GUARANTEE PROTECTION. Colostrum provides a general mass of antibodies to the calf, not a guarantee that the calf will be scour-free. To ensure protection from the first diseases calves are likely to be exposed to after birth, producers can consider complementing colostrum with USDA-approved antibody products.

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