Plan to attend the 2016 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Conference

Annual conference will focus on industry challenges and opportunities

The annual Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) Conference is set for April 11-13, 2016 in Madison, Wis. The people working to raise dairy calves and heifers share unique challenges. Join like-minded individuals for educational presentations focused on these challenges and the opportunities they present. Producer panels, presentations and breakout sessions will discuss housing, nutrition, disease management, antibiotic use and the profitability of raising dairy-beef. Other topics will include building client and team relationships and new aspects of animal welfare. A highlight of the conference will be updates to the DCHA’s Gold Standards of calf and heifer raising.

The event will include on-farm sessions and tours; as well as post-conference tours and demonstrations at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine.

This exciting conference will give attendees opportunities to network with other calf and heifer raisers and service providers during an industry-specific trade show. Custom heifer raisers, dairy producers, veterinarians, nutritionists and anyone with a vested interest in raising calves are invited to attend.

Sponsorship opportunities for this can’t-miss event are available. Contact kanderson@calfandheifer.org to learn about sponsorship opportunities.

For more information about the 2016 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Annual Conference or to join DCHA visit www.calfandheifer.org, call (855) 400-3242 or email info@calfandheifer.org

To take advantage of a DCHA membership, visit www.calfandheifer.org. You can also interact with DCHA on Facebook at facebook.com/CalfandHeifer and follow @CalfandHeifer on Twitter.
Keep your winter care plan in check

Giving your calves and heifers the extra attention they need in cold winter months is imperative to keep them healthy and growing. Their energy requirements greatly increase during the winter season due to cold stress and as a result, increases the risk for disease. Depending on age, calves can experience cold stress at varying temperatures. Keep in mind that the lower critical temperature for newborn calves is 59 degrees F, compared to 32 degrees F for older calves. Look to the following key areas to make sure your winter calf and heifer care plan is in check.

EXTRA NUTRIENTS

Cold weather increases the energy requirements for both calves and heifers. Providing them with more nutrients during colder temperatures not only gives them more energy, it helps them regulate their body temperature. A variety of feeding strategies can be adapted in winter months to help optimize growth.

For pre-weaned calves, consider:
- If using a milk replacer, it should contain at least 20% fat.
- Increase the solids content in milk replacer from 12.5% to 16%.
- If only feeding twice a day, increase to three times a day while maintaining the same quantity.
- Feed more milk per feeding, e.g., increase from 3 to 4 quarts, two times per day.

Heifers should gain an average of 1.7 to 2 pounds per day in order to reach their desired breeding size at 13 to 15 months of age. The ultimate goal is for heifers to calve in at 22-24 months of age, at about 90% of their mature body weight. Careful management of heifers during the winter months will be crucial to achieving this goal.

WATER

In cold weather, it can be more difficult to ensure calves and heifers have access to water. For calves on milk, keep in mind that water should be fed at their normal body temperature of 101.5 degrees F. If water is fed at a lower temperature, calves will utilize energy to warm up the water to their body temperature. Feeding water right after milk feeding encourages more water intake during cold weather.

Check water buckets and waterers between feedings to keep water from freezing. Make sure the area surrounding waterers provides enough traction, as ice can quickly build up. Have a plan as to where waterers should be emptied during the winter, so as not to create an ice rink near your calves.

BEDDING

Provide plenty of clean, dry bedding. Sometimes, this might mean bedding hutsches or pens more frequently as weather changes. Calves and heifers should have enough bedding to nestle in to maintain their body temperature. Wet bedding can greatly increase heat loss. Continue to monitor bedding areas to make sure you’re providing enough bedding by actually kneeling on the bedding to determine if it’s wet. What might look like a well-bedded pen can prove otherwise when you actually take the time to step in the pen and get a feel for it yourself.

VENTILATION

Respiratory issues in calves and heifers are more prevalent in the winter months. Stay ahead of the curve by providing optimal ventilation in all housing environments. Housing should provide enough air exchange without becoming drafty, and protecting calves and heifers from the extreme elements.

If heifers are housed outdoors, make sure they have access to some type of windbreak – natural or constructed. Continuously monitor calves and heifers for abnormal breathing and coughing. Early detection of sickness is the key to successful treatment and getting your calves and heifers back on track.

Focusing on these key areas in the winter months will help you monitor your calves and heifers on milk, and get a feel for them. After all, the future of your business depends on them.

Be a part of the dairy industry’s future.

There is one industry-leading source of networking, education and improvement for the raising of dairy calves and heifers. The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association has a renewed commitment to their vision to be just that.