

# HEIFER NOTES

Growing Our Future™



## DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION



## SEEN AND HEARD AT THE 2016 DCHA CONFERENCE



**Brian Musser of Dream Farms, Newburg, Penn.**

“For the dairy producer who has the calves born on their farm, the most important time of that calf’s life is that first hour. You need to get colostrum in them – the proper amount at the proper time.”



**Jeannie Bishop of Merck Animal Health, Farmington, Wis.**

“Attending a tradeshow like DCHA is a great way to network with other colleagues who go through the same things you do. You’ll find it’s very well worth it to talk to other producers who are facing similar challenges and get new ideas to take back home, which ultimately can you make you a better operation and lead to more profitability.”

## The new Gold Standards

Setting the benchmark for your herd’s future



A new edition of the Gold Standards will be available to all DCHA members this fall. The Gold Standards provides a framework for raising heifers, including research-based benchmarks and best management practices.

A passionate committee comprised of 15 members including calf and heifer raisers, allied industry professionals and academia have been working on updating the Gold Standards, which was last revised in 2011. These industry leaders have brought their expertise and dedication to calf and heifer raising to this edition of the Gold Standards. This resource is the result of their tireless efforts, which will help drive the industry for years to come.

Dr. Sam Leadley, calf and heifer management specialist for Attica Veterinary Associates, Attica, NY, has been actively involved on the committee and is looking forward to putting the new Gold Standards into practice through his consulting work.

“One big advantage of the revision is the integrated format – all ages in one document with the welfare standards placed next to the relevant practices,” says Leadley.

The new Gold Standards provides the most current standards for calf and heifer raising. Whether you’re a calf and

heifer raiser or consultant, you can use this new edition to set goals for success.

“At some point in every consulting relationship with clients we end up talking about the dairy’s goals for the calf enterprise,” says Leadley. “The production standards in the Gold Standards provide the framework for this conversation. I use the Gold Standards as a guide to keep the conversation on track in setting farm-specific performance goals.”

It’s important to establish goals to keep the industry, and your herd, moving forward.

“The comprehensive list of production standards in the Gold Standards provides a checklist against which heifer management practices may be compared. This is a big improvement over a ‘bits and pieces’ approach that can easily miss opportunities for improving enterprise profitability,” says Leadley.

Full access to the new Gold Standards will be available to all DCHA members this fall. Renew your membership or join starting September 1 to secure your membership through 2017. To renew your membership or become a new member, visit our website: [www.calfandheifer.org](http://www.calfandheifer.org).

“I use the Gold Standards as a guide to keep the conversation on track in setting farm-specific performance goals.”



SKY’S THE LIMIT

2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
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Additional information will be available at:  
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# When breeding heifers, how big is big enough?



Recent herd evaluations from Zoetis show differences in heifer weight and height due to differences in genomic standardized transmitting abilities (STA) for strength and stature.

Zoetis evaluations report that at approximately

12 to 13 months of age:

- **Calculated weight varied by approximately 90 pounds** due to genetic size differences in genomic STA for strength between -2 and +1.5.
- **Height varied as much as 2 to 2.5 inches** in heifers that varied in differences in genomic STA for stature.<sup>2</sup> Another way to look at it is that heifer height ranged from 0.5 to 0.87 inches taller per change of +1 in STA for stature.<sup>1,2</sup>

These evaluations demonstrate how genetics play a large part in heifer growth. Genomic information can give you an estimate of whether a heifer is expected to be bigger or smaller than others at that age. Again, why wait for size alone to determine breeding age? Consider breeding heifers based on age to avoid losing income because they look smaller, when, genetically, heifers will vary in size and some heifers are supposed to be smaller than others. Of course, animals that are noticeably smaller due to previous health challenges are a different story, which is where good health records can help.

With the help of genomics, producers can eliminate the guesswork from these decisions.

Information provided by Dave Erf of Zoetis, DCHA sponsor. Visit [CLARIFIDE.com](http://CLARIFIDE.com) to learn more.

- 1 Data on file, Zoetis Internal Data, April 2014, n > 1600, Zoetis Inc.
- 2 Data on file, Zoetis Internal Data, March 2014, n = 160, Zoetis Inc.

Waiting for heifers to reach height benchmarks can be a costly practice for dairies, leading to delayed first breeding, delayed entry into the milking herd and delayed milk production. The reality is that heifers are genetically predisposed to be different sizes.

Genomic testing can more accurately reveal a heifer's growth potential early in life, allowing producers to accelerate genetic progress with confidence and enhance profitability, all while capitalizing on higher production and profit potential.

## Get more with DCHA

Being a DCHA member means more for you. In addition to being part of the only national association with a focus on dairy calves and heifers, DCHA offers benefits that will help your bottom line. DCHA members receive discounts and incentives from these industry partners:

### DCHA CONFERENCE

\$100 off your registration



### HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

Free issue, quarterly, with *Heifer Notes*



### FIRST PIONEER INSURANCE AGENCY

Workers' compensation program savings



### CAT® NATIONAL ACCOUNT PROGRAM

Exclusive, discounted pricing



### FUTURECOW®

\$150 ComfortBrush™ discount



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## 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.

*Heifer Notes* is published quarterly by the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association and distributed to all DCHA members and associated organizations through a partnership with *Hoard's Dairyman*.

**BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!**

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