Producers continue “Moving Forward” with a motivating Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Conference

Over 500 dairy calf and heifer growers, industry representatives and allied associates attended the 2016 DCHA Conference. Months of planning by producers, academia and more culminated in a successful conference highlighting the best in the industry.

“The DCHA Conference this year showed our commitment to our members,” says Lane Sollenberger, DCHA President and owner of Dream Farms in Newburg, Pa. “It was great to be able to see the continued growth of the organization through the people at the conference. I always enjoy opportunities to learn from the diverse group of people that speak at the conference and those you can meet between sessions. We really got to focus on teamwork and opportunities for moving our own operations forward. As DCHA’s president, I’m honored to be able to be a part of DCHA’s continued growth and development. I can’t wait to see what the future holds.”

The DCHA team created the three-day agenda with a focus on calf and heifer performance, employee empowerment and financial success.

CONFERECE HIGHLIGHTS

Farm tours: Attendees toured Nehls Bros. Farms, a 2,100-cow facility in Juneau, Wis. which focuses on both calf health and team member communication. Additionally, attendees saw a low-velocity ventilation calf barn, precision calf care techniques and exceptional team member management practices at Rosy-Lane Holsteins in Watertown, Wis.

Educational sessions: A variety of seminar-style sessions were offered during the conference, covering: calf health, heifer performance, dairy beef, employee management and more.

Industry tradeshow: More than 60 innovative companies highlighted the latest products, technology and information at their booths.

Keynote speaker: Paul Vitale, of Vital Communications, Inc., emphasized the importance of building up the enthusiasm of individuals and creating a more unified team.

Annual meeting: DCHA celebrated 20 years and their continued mission to move the industry forward. The 2016 scholarship was also awarded to Erika Nagorske of Falcon Heights, Minn.

Social media giveaway: Attendees used #DCHA2016 throughout the conference to share their experiences on social media. Wicton Farms won a free 2017 conference registration for using #DCHA2016 on social media.

Post-conference tour: Attendees got first-hand lessons about cleaning and sanitation, diagnosing calf scours and administering fluid therapy during the event hosted by the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the University of Wisconsin-School of Veterinary Medicine.

More than 1,000,000 cattle from 27 states and 10 countries represented
Benefits of balancers
Using a pasteurized waste milk balancer can help bridge these nutritional shortfalls you might be facing in your nutritional program.

1. Consistency – Solids levels in waste milk can vary considerably, depending on how many fresh versus sick cows contributed to a particular batch, whether flush water may have been rinsed into a load, and how frequently the waste milk is agitated.

2. Performance – A field trial of 240 calves compared the growth of calves fed 2.1 quarts of pasteurized waste milk three times per day, to calves fed the same volume of pasteurized waste milk plus 9 ounces of balancer per calf per day. Calves on the balancer-enhanced diet gained 17 percent more weight by weaning, and showed greater hip height (8 percent), body length (7 percent) and heart girth (35 percent).1

3. Milk supply management – Virginia Tech researchers found that dairy's typically generate 30 to 60 percent of the waste milk needed to feed all of their preweaned calves.2 On dairies feeding a full potential liquid ration, that percentage drops to 10 to 20 percent.

4. Missing nutrients – A comparison to NRC guidelines shows whole milk is deficient in vitamins D3 and E, all seven essential trace minerals, and five of eight essential B vitamins.3 Balancer products contain these additive nutrients to fortify whole milk. In addition to these benefits, research shows feeding a complete full potential feeding program (full potential milk diet, 22 percent starter and 18 percent grower) can help your calves produce up to 2,740 more pounds of milk in their first lactation.4

Farm tours kick off a successful conference
Farm tours are a highlight of the DCHA Conference each year. This year’s tours were hosted by Rosy-Lane Holsteins, Watertown, Wis., and Nehls Bros. Farm, Juneau, Wis.

ROSSY-LANE HOLSTEINS
In 2011, a new calf barn addition was added for 46 calves, bringing total capacity to 130 head. Recently updated low-velocity ventilation runs year-round in both calf barns. Calf hutches are used for any overflow. The farm has also added a head from birth to 4 months old and between 80 and 100 calves on milk. Consistency is key in their calf care operation, where they focus on achieving 100% every day. Not 98%. Always 100%.

NEHLS BROS. FARM
The farm focuses on having well-trained, dedicated employees who understand and follow their calf system. They utilize five basics for calf care: colostrum, calories, cleanliness, comfort and consistency. They emphasize the treatment of each calf and an individual. Their calf care protocols are fully driven by calf age, not groupings or management schedules. Regardless of the day of the week, calves receive age-based protocols on the date needed.

Erika Nagorske receives $1,000 scholarship
A future Minnesota dairy veterinarian is the recipient of the 2016 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Scholarship. Erika Nagorske is a fourth-year student at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. Nagorske earned a Bachelor’s Degree in animal science with a pre-veterinary emphasis in 2012 from the University of Minnesota. From an internship at Trans Ova Genetics to an externship through Zoets’ bovine program and beyond, Nagorske has shown outstanding potential.

“She is one of the few students I have worked with who, very early on in her student career, identified dairy youngster as her area of passion and focus,” says Dr. Sandra Godden, Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. Nagorske’s strong motivation to make a positive impact on the dairy calf and heifer industry was a crucial part of selecting her for the scholarship.

“My involvement in dairy calf and heifer consultation will be extensive, as I am most passionate about dairy calf and heifer management and its role as an area of opportunity for many producers,” says Nagorske.

Upon graduation, Nagorske plans to work at Worthington Veterinary Medical Center in Worthington, Minn. She will conduct herd health monitoring, perform reproductive and milk quality services, work with producers to develop treatment and vaccination protocols and make dairy calf and heifer consultation visits. DCHA annually awards a scholarship to an outstanding agricultural-focused student with the goal of supporting the future of the dairy industry. Nagorske’s passion and commitment to the industry helped her to earn this year’s $1,000 award.

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