Dairy Calf and Heifer Association shatters conference attendance record

More than 2 million cattle from 30 states and 10 countries represented at annual event

The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association’s annual conference shattered previous attendance records this year. More than 600 dairy calf and heifer growers, dairy farmers and allied industry professionals who represent more than 2 million cattle, attended the 2017 DCHA conference, April 11-13 in Madison, Wis. Attendees traveled from 30 states and 10 countries.

“The DCHA board of directors and conference committee provided attendees one of our finest conferences ever,” said Lane Sollenberger, DCHA president and general manager of Dream Farms in Newburg, Pa. “The information shared by keynote speakers and producer panels paired with exceptional farm tours, educational breakout sessions, trade show and unmatched networking has us elevating the level of education and expertise provided by this conference and association. Additionally, the Gold Standards have complemented all aspects of DCHA’s goals.”

Calf and heifer performance, employee empowerment and animal welfare were the key focus of this year’s conference.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- **Farm tours**: Attendees visited Endres Jazzy Jerseys and Ziegler Dairy Farm. Owners of Endres Jazzy Jerseys of Lodi, Wis., discussed specialized newborn calf care, transition management and were given an overview of the DCHA Gold Standards. At Ziegler Dairy Farm in Middleton, Wis., members saw group calf housing with autofeeders, heifer transition barns and off-site heifer grower facilities.

- **Educational sessions**: During the conference, members learned about new discoveries in calf health and nutrition, heifer reproduction and monitoring, group housing and feeding, animal welfare, real-world experiences from a panel of calf and heifer raisers, employee management and more.

- **Industry tradeshow**: More than 80 innovative calf- and heifer-focused companies highlighted the latest products, technology and information at their booths.

- **Keynote speaker**: Ruby Newell-Legner, 7 Star Service, showed members how to create a positive work environment to foster trust and develop teamwork.

- **Annual meeting**: DCHA celebrated another year of success and welcomed two new board members, Sam Gardner of Huddleston, Va. and Megan Kissel of Wendell, Idaho. Emily Butner of San Marcos, Calif., was recognized as the 2017 DCHA scholarship winner.

- **Social media giveaway**: Attendees used #DCHA2017 throughout the conference to share their experiences on social media. Ryleigh Rowcliffe, CY Heifer Farm of Basom, NY won a free 2018 conference registration for using #DCHA2017 on social media.

- **Post-conference wet lab**: The Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL) brought hands-on learning for members to know what to look for in an electrolyte, how to administer fluid therapy, in addition to a full necropsy.
Optimal heifer nutrition means optimal reproduction

When do you start breeding your heifers? What’s your goal? Breeding heifers sooner means an earlier age at first calving and a more profitable cow. The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association Gold Standards recommend breeding heifers when they reach 55 percent of the weight of mature cows—which is usually around 11–13 months. To keep heifer growth on track to meet this goal, heifer diets need to provide enough protein, energy, minerals and vitamins. Proper nutrition not only helps heifers grow but also helps prepare their reproductive system for breeding. A summary of five research studies showed supplementing heifer rations with zinc, magnesium, copper and cobalt resulted in fewer days open, higher pregnancy rates and fewer services per conception.1 After breeding, balanced heifer diets have benefits that carry over to their first lactation. High protein heifer diets have been shown to support increased milk production and higher milk components during early lactation—which can add to your bottom line.2 Are your heifers prepared to reach their full genetic potential in the milking string? It starts with adequate nutrition through consistent and balanced heifer rations. Contact your local Purina calf and heifer specialist to learn more about how optimal nutrition can help your heifers successfully enter the milking herd.

Information provided by Jason Leonard of Purina Animal Nutrition, DCHA sponsor.

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.

Butner awarded Dairy Calf and Heifer Association scholarship

Cal Poly student receives $1,000

The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) congratulates Emily Butner of San Marcos, Calif. as the 2017 recipient of their annual $1,000 scholarship. Butner was not raised on a dairy farm but has immersed herself in learning by doing at the Cal Poly Dairy, where she found her passion for the dairy industry. As an on-call staff member for the dairy, Butner has used her classroom knowledge and applied it to real-life situations. Butner also works as a rumenist nutrition research assistant at the university. She is currently involved in a research study on fiber digestibility in calf diets. “Emily has a strong drive to succeed, both in her academics and in her work life. In my estimation, her drive is paying off,” says Dr. Leanne Berning, a dairy science professor at Cal Poly State University. “On tap of her studies, Emily works extensively at the university’s dairy. Altogether, this capable young woman is working hard to prepare herself for a career working with cattle.”

As a non-traditional dairy science student, Butner has a unique understanding of the gap between the agriculture industry and the consumer. Prior to her college education and experiences, Butner didn’t realize how much effort it takes to produce food. Now, she strives to be an agriculture advocate for animals and by her optimism for innovations awaiting our industry in the future, “I chose to pursue a career in agriculture because I am driven by my passion for animals and by my optimism for innovations awaiting our industry in the future,” says Butner. “I was not born on a farm, but I got to one as fast as I could – and I am here to stay.”

DCHA annually awards a scholarship to an outstanding agriculture-focused student with the goal of supporting the future of the dairy industry. Merial is the sponsor for this year’s scholarship.


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.

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