Looking forward and seeking opportunities for growth is important for the long-term success of your business. That’s the viewpoint of Sam Gardner as he takes a closer look at agenda topics for the 2018 DCHA conference.

Not only does Gardner have the privilege of helping shape the conference agenda in his role as planning committee co-chair, but he also looks to the conference as an opportunity to help shape the future of his calf and heifer grower business, Gardner Heifers, Inc. in Virginia.

“As far as bringing our learnings home, we’re a custom raiser so we don’t have wet calves. However, we’re looking to do some research about them as an area we can grow in,” says Gardner.

Gardner Heifers is currently home to 500 heifers with capacity for 1,000 head. They work with three clients and are actively seeking more. Calves are brought to their facility at 4.5 months in groups of 30–40 where they’ll be raised for 16–18 months. A unique aspect of their setup is all heifers have access to pasture. Gardner Heifers is also home to two on-site veterinarians, Sam’s parents, Don and Susie Gardner.

With a focus on the future, Gardners are always looking for areas to improve and grow their current business. They attend the DCHA conference knowing they’ll be able to take their learnings back home.

“I would like to build experience and knowledge if we get into the wet calf arena — what kind of things do I need to be prepared for as far as hauling them. In terms of group housing, what type of facilities do I need to look at,” says Gardner.

“Dr. von Keyserlingk was really interesting in the 2017 conference as far as animal behavior and welfare, and I’m looking forward to hearing what’s new from her,” he adds.

VALUE VS. INVESTMENT

Are you considering attending the conference, but not sure about the investment?

Here’s what Gardner says, as someone who has attended the conference five different times:

“The amount of information vastly exceeds the price of registration. To be able to apply what you learn from the conference to your own business is extremely affordable.”

In the past, even if Gardner wasn’t able to attend the conference himself, at least one of their employees would attend.

“Even the topics that don’t directly apply to us — wet calves for example — we can still learn from them. It also gives us the opportunity to take the information we learn and share it with our clients which can help them on their dairy. In the end, the better calf they send to us, the better heifer I can return to them,” says Gardner.

DCHA conference: Topics to shape your business’ future

An agenda built by calf and heifer raisers like you
Help move our industry forward
Join like members with a vested interest in calves and heifers

By being a member of DCHA, you join members with the same vested interest in calves and heifers. Through collaboration as an organization, we help advance and improve this critical segment of the dairy industry.

Whether you’re a current member, have been a member in the past, or have never joined, DCHA has something to offer you. We asked our membership what they value most in being a DCHA member. Here are some of their priorities:

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The association’s annual conference provides the latest in industry happenings, calf and heifer management strategies, hands-on demonstrations and unmatched networking opportunities. As a member you receive a $100 discount on conference registration.

The 2018 conference is set for April 10–12 at the Potawatomi Hotel and Casino in Milwaukee, Wis. Registrations are open. Reserve your spot today at calfandheifer.org.

### CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKING

From the annual conference, membership list access and member-only Facebook group, there are countless opportunities for you to network with members across the country and world year-round.

There’s no other organization with a sole focus on calves and heifers. This very focused organization makes it easy for you to connect with other members who are experiencing the same things you are in your farm and business.

### RESOURCES

DCHA communicates with its membership throughout the year using a variety of communication tools — email, social media, website and this publication, our quarterly newsletter.

### GOLD STANDARDS

The DCHA Gold Standards are the industry benchmarks and best management practices for raising dairy calves and heifers. Through your membership, you have access to a printed copy of the Gold Standards and full access to the digital version and infographics through your website membership portal.

### FARM TOURS

As part of the DCHA annual conference, the conference committee strives to showcase an array of calf and heifer management practices and facilities. The tours are a highly reviewed experience in our conference surveys each year.

### MEMBER BENEFITS

In addition to being part of the only association with a focus on dairy calves and heifers, DCHA offers benefits to help your bottom line. Members receive discounts and incentives from these industry partners:

- **Access to DCHA Gold Standards**
- **$150 FutureCow ComfortBrush™ discount**
- **$100 annual conference registration discount**
- **Access to the members-only DCHA Facebook group**
- **Free quarterly Hoard’s Dairyman with Heifer Notes**
- **Workers’ compensation program savings through First Pioneer Insurance Agency**

Whether you are a producer, manager, farm employee or allied industry professional, DCHA is an organization that will enhance your success in the calf and heifer industry.

Membership is annual and is renewable the first of each year. Visit calfandheifer.org to renew your membership or become a new member.

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1. Compared to calves fed an above average nutrition diet on the same farm. 314,760 lactation observations and 344 animals studied at the Purina Animal Nutrition Center from April 2007 to April 2007.

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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.

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