DCHA speakers challenge attendees to reach higher

More than 1.3 million cattle from 33 states and 8 countries represented at conference

The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) Annual Conference, held April 9-11, in Madison, Wis., provided a well-rounded mix of technical information and practical advice to help attendees take their dairy operations to a higher level. More than 400 dairy calf and heifer growers, dairy farmers and allied industry professionals attended the conference, which offered numerous networking and learning opportunities.

“The conference offered world-renowned speakers who shared ideas and technologies that are implementable on many dairy operations,” said DCHA President T.J. McClure of Prairie Wind Heifer Development, Johnson, Kan. “Despite the dairy industry’s current economic challenges, attendees left with renewed energy and enthusiasm for raising calves and heifers.”

DCHA’s Gold Standards – industry benchmarks and best management practices for raising dairy calves and heifers – remain the foundation of moving dairy operations forward.

“The information, knowledge and experience gained at this year’s DCHA Annual Conference complement and support the organization’s Gold Standards,” said McClure.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Tours
This year’s conference kicked off with stops at ABS Global’s Dekorra and Windsor facilities. Dekorra features a state-of-the-art calf facility where guests learned about top-notch biosecurity and animal health practices. The Windsor location is home to IntelliGen, which processes sexed bovine genetics. From there, the group headed east to Crave Brothers Farm LLC, Waterloo, Wis., which recently added three all-in-all-out calf nursery barns. The conference concluded with a tour of STgenetics’ testing site in Middleton, Wis.

Educational sessions
During the conference, DCHA members heard thought-provoking presentations that addressed diverse topics, including colostrum management, fly control, disease outbreak prevention, treatment and control, sustainable environmental practices, labor, cost and risk management, animal and human well-being, custom heifer-raising contracts, beef quality assurance, calf scours, dry period heat stress, gut health, alternative milk sources and animal welfare.

Hands-on seminars
Don Sackett and Theresa Ollivett from the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine demonstrated deep nasopharyngeal swabs and lung ultrasounds, respectively. Seminar registrants learned how to perform these tests.

Trade show
More than 60 innovative calf- and heifer-focused companies showcased the latest products, technologies and information at their booths.

Other highlights
During the DCHA Annual Meeting, McClure thanked four retiring directors – Lane Sollenberger, Newburg, Pa.; Vickie Franken, Sutherland, Iowa; Bob James, Blacksburg, Va.; and Brent Caffee, Decatur, Ind. This year’s board of directors are: President T.J. McClure, Vice President Elizabeth Quinn; Secretary/Treasurer Sam Gardner; West Regional Director Megan Kissel; Central Regional Director Jamie Franken; Northeast Regional Director John Balbian; At-large Director Tamilee Nennich; Academia Director Theresa Ollivett, University of Wisconsin; and Corporate/Company Director Kerry Nauwkoop, Merck Animal Health.
Essential information for improving calf health
By Jason Lombard, U.S. Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services, and Frank Garry, Colorado State University Extension

Did you know that there are several ways to evaluate and mitigate health challenges in your calves? For example, recording information about events that occur on the day of each of your calves’ birth can help you assess risk factors for calf disease, and information about causes of calf death can help you identify risks for other calves. Most producers track some information about their calves, but they often fail to capture and utilize much of the important and easily accessible information that can help their calves perform better in the future.

A recent article in the Journal of Dairy Science identifies what data all producers should collect at birth, as well as a standardized method for classifying calf deaths. You can find the abstract at: https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2018-15728.

“In addition to what you normally record, such as birthdate and dam identification, we recommend that you record whether calves experienced dystocia, how much they weighed following birth, specifics about colostrum feeding and an evaluation of passive transfer.”

We have modified the concept of a “Birth Certificate” for use in tracking important information about calves on the day of their birth. In addition to what you normally record, such as birthdate and dam identification, we recommend that you record whether calves experienced dystocia, how much they weighed following birth, specifics about colostrum feeding and an evaluation of passive transfer. This additional information can help evaluate the risks for disease and death.

In the case of calf deaths, recording the cause and date of death helps determine whether management changes can reduce future deaths. The term “stillbirth,” for example, which should be defined as calves born dead, has been used by the dairy industry to account for calf deaths occurring for up to 48 hours following birth. Deaths traditionally defined as stillbirths in current records can be better defined to reflect whether dystocia, calving management or newborn calf care could be improved to reduce calf losses. Ideally, most calf deaths can be examined and explained by necropsy. Even without a necropsy, however, the proposed categorization scheme and additional data collected on the birth certificate will provide producers and their health care teams with additional means for evaluating and preventing calf deaths.

Calf death categories include:
1. Congenital defects
2. Stillbirth following a normal/unassisted birth
3. Perinatal death
4. Stillbirth following an assisted birth
5. Calving problems
6. Septicemia
7. Respiratory and diarrhea
8. Diarrhea
9. Other digestive
10. Respiratory
11. Joint or navel
12. Lameness or injury
13. Accident
14. Other known reason
15. Unknown reason

Click on the “WHAT’S NEW” tab on the DCHA website (calfandheifer.org) to download the Calf Birth Certificate and view the Calf Death Loss Flow Chart.

THANK YOU DCHA SPONSORS
The Dairy Calf and Heifer Association would not be possible without the generous support of our industry sponsors.

DIAMOND SPONSORS
Dairy Herd Management
Hoard’s Dairyman
MILK

PLATINUM SPONSORS
Dairy Tech
Elanco
Merck Animal Health
Purina Animal Nutrition

SILVER SPONSORS
ABS
American Dairyman
American Foods Group
Balchem
Boehringer Ingelheim
Champion Animal Health
DBC Ag Products
Genex
Hubbard
Lallemand Animal Nutrition
Morning Ag Clips
SCCL
STgenetics
Vita Plus
Zoetis

BRONZE SPONSORS
Agri-View
Biomin
Calf-Tel by Hampel
Central Life Sciences
Diamond V
Milk Products
Phileo Lesaffre Animal Care
Progressive Dairyman
Techmix
VAS

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.
Keith Poulsen, with the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine, keynoted the 2019 Dairy Calf & Heifer Association (DCHA) Annual Conference, held April 9-11, in Madison, Wis. Sharing a message of business growth, he said, “Calf and heifer raisers, like any other business, need to be in a perpetual state of growth to maintain viability and vitality. Growth keeps us on top of the curve and able to be agile to adapt to changing markets and industry standards.”

Poulsen explained that growth is more than revenue. “It (growth) is a mindset opposite of a fixed mindset,” he said. For example, rather than jumping to conclusions (fixed mindset), make fact-based decisions (growth mindset). Additionally, he described someone with a fixed mindset as someone who blames others and focuses on activities, rather than taking the initiative to make things better and focusing on results (growth mindset).

“Are you in the right market?” If growth is one of your goals and you firmly believe that the heifers you raise are of high quality, take time to evaluate if you are in the right market. Poulsen shared a quote from business magnate Warren Buffet. “When a leader with reputation for brilliance meets an industry with a reputation for lousy economics, the reputation of the industry will survive – because in terms of long-term financial results, the pond you jump into is 10 times as important as how well you swim.”

Poulsen encouraged calf and heifer growers to jump into a “good pond.” “No matter how hard we work, success will be limited if we are in a bad pond,” said Poulsen. “The only way around this in a lousy market is to reinvent the model and do things differently. If the market is lousy because it is not developed, consider moving away from being product driven to market driven. Move from being in the business of raising calves from weaning to breeding to being in the business of maximizing dairy profitability.”

Incorporate innovation

Enhanced profitability requires innovative ideas. To foster innovative ideas, Poulsen said to stop thinking about what and how you are doing something and focus on why you are doing it. This approach is not solely for calf and heifer managers; it’s for all employees. “Keeping the ‘Why’ in the forefront of your operation will truly differentiate your brand when many fall,” he said. Poulsen based his recommendation on work done by Simon Sineck and the Ted Talk “How Great Leaders Inspire Action.”

Poulsen’s take home message is that we always need to be thinking about process improvement. “Having an effective and engaged team is the direct return on investment in an operation that is purpose and market driven with a growth mindset,” he said. “Invest time and training to instill the ‘Why’ in your operation.”

WWW.CALFANDHEIFER.ORG

PROTERNATIVE MILK – THE NEW MEASURE OF PREVENTION

Fulfilling your commitment to provide the best care for your calves sometimes means following a different road. Recent advancements in pre-weaned calf nutrition have opened new routes to help address stress, limit treatment and positively benefit the health of an animal. Adopting a new measure of prevention through milk or milk replacer is an important first step to help minimize delays on the road ahead.

“The road you’ve always taken doesn’t cut it anymore. Feed ProTernative Milk and take a new measure of prevention.”

Ask your nutritionist how to integrate ProTernative Milk in your operation today!

Visit LallemandAnimalNutrition.com to learn more.

LALLEMAND ANIMAL NUTRITION SPECIFIC FOR YOUR SUCCESS

©2019. ProTernative is a registered trademark of Lallemand Animal Nutrition.
The Dairy Calf & Heifer Association (DCHA) selected Kyle Karlen, Owen, Wis., as this year’s $1,000 scholarship recipient. The DCHA scholarship program recognizes an outstanding student pursuing a degree in agriculture, with a particular interest in calf health and future productivity.

Karlen earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and is now pursuing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from UW-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. For the past two summers, Karlen worked as a Dairyland Initiative research assistant. His duties included designing and performing cattle lameness research, surveying dairy owners, handling cattle and educating dairy farm owners and managers. He also completed internships with Gold n’ Plump Poultry and We Energies, and gained livestock experience by working on his family’s farm and with UW-River Falls’ dairy herd. As an undergraduate, Karlen was a member of the animal welfare judging team and lead undergraduate research assistant on a study that investigated methods of treating pain, following caustic paste disbudding in dairy calves. He played a significant role in designing the study and handled data collection, research method establishment and scheduling.

With a passion for animal welfare, Karlen started riding with veterinarians when he was in eighth grade. He has spent many hours shadowing and working with a variety of veterinarians. Based on those experiences, his career plans include dairy herd health work and consulting services, such as freestall and barn design, ventilation audits and calf health assessments.

Wisconsin student earns DCHA 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.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

855-400-DCHA
INFO@CALFANDHEIFER.ORG
WWW.CALFANDHEIFER.ORG
FOLLOW US: 

HEART MEETS SMART

The world’s best-selling calf hutch. Learn why Calf-Tel is the SMART choice when it comes to your calves.

Class is now in session at Calf-Tel.com!