

SUMMER 2014

HEIFER NOTES

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DCHA
DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION



Dairy Calf and Heifer Association celebrates success of newly-revamped annual conference

U.S. calf and heifer growers learn new strategies in dairy management during annual event – hosted by producers April 1-3 in Green Bay, Wis.

More than 300 dairy calf and heifer growers and industry representatives, representing more than 500,000 cattle, met for the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) 2014 Annual Conference. The conference lineup included:

interactive educational seminars for both farm managers and employees, an inside look at industry-leading dairy operations and a keynote presentation from renowned leader and Green Bay Packers' all-time leading receiver Donald Driver.

"The conference was an exciting event for our organization and our industry," says Jack Banker, DCHA President and owner of

Scenic-View Farms in Black Creek, Wis. "Calf and heifer growers from across the country joined in the excitement of the renewed vision of DCHA by sharing their experiences and learning new management strategies. The success of the conference is a testament to our organization's future strength – a future that we are very excited about."

The annual conference was planned and hosted by dairy producers with new avenues of industry education. Through a mix of classroom and on-farm sessions, industry experts shared management strategies and expertise on topics, including: calf health, housing, silage quality, team

management, sanitation, ventilation, forage testing and audits, manure management, genomics, federal policy and much more.

"The new conference format helped calf and heifer growers to see strategies that are working on successful facilities and to talk with the managers about what is working well and challenges they have overcome," says Vickie Franken, 2014 conference committee chair and owner of City View Farms near Sutherland, Iowa.

Rounding out the event was a keynote address by Donald Driver, who commended the producers in attendance for being champions in the agriculture industry.

"You are all leaders and you are all here for a reason," Driver said. "The reason is to be successful, learn new tricks and trades and make the impossible, possible. Because of the people, DCHA has been around for 18 years and it won't go away as long as you believe in it."

Additional highlights included: a trade show focused on calf and heifer products and services and facility tours at Calf Source, a 10,000-head calf facility in DePere, Wis. which recently invested

more than \$2 million in facility and system upgrades; a stop at Green Valley Dairy a family-owned operation in Krakow, Wis., that received the 2014 Outstanding Achievement in Renewable Energy by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy; a tour of Genex Cooperative, Inc.'s bull housing and semen collection facility in Shawano, Wis., that houses 378 bulls and employs 15 staff members; and a visit to Synergy Dairy a Red & White Holstein facility in Pulaski, Wis., that recently built a new heifer housing facility, allowing the managers to bring their previously custom-raised heifers back to the farm.

Make plans to join DCHA for the 2015 conference, set for March 30-April 1, 2015 in Madison, Wis.

“Because of the people, DCHA has been around for 18 years and it won't go away as long as you believe in it.”
Donald Driver, keynote speaker”

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Experts cover wide variety of topics at DCHA Conference



TEAM LEADERSHIP: Employees are a vital component of today's calf and heifer facilities, said Rodney Jackson of People First. Jackson provided strategies for optimal communication between facility managers and employees, including: on-farm team meetings, off-site training sessions and open dialogue for employee feedback.

FACILITY SANITATION: Calf raisers need to maintain clean equipment to prepare and deliver milk to their calves, said Dr. Skip Olson of Milk Products. In a hands-on, on-farm demonstration, Olson shared strategies on measuring the effectiveness of a facility's sanitation program and its impact on calf health, growth and future productivity.

VENTILATION: Dr. Ryan Leiterman of Crystal Creek explained in an on-farm demonstration that a calf barn ventilation system can help prevent respiratory disease, a problem which can reduce a heifer's first lactation milk yield by more than 1,500 pounds. Leiterman shared advancements in the duct manufacturing process and design software that help managers deliver fresh, quality air to calves.

FORAGE TESTING: New technologies in forage tracking and dry matter content measuring were shared by Chris Horton of Digi-Star. A hands-on demonstration showed producers a new technology that allows them to measure forage moisture content instantaneously for quicker ration reformulations and feed purchases.

MANURE MANAGEMENT: Manure is a commodity for farm managers and a revenue stream that is often

overlooked, said Peter Westra at Hull Coop Association. Westra provided insights on calculating the value of manure and tips for maximizing revenue from waste.

TMR AUDITS: Kristy Pagel of Diamond V showed producers strategies for evaluating their feeding systems in a hands-on session. "From the cows to the labor to overall feed center management, it's about gaining efficiency, reducing shrink and setting up the system to be a driver for long-term success," she said.

EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT: Employee management doesn't have to be complicated, said Tom Wall of Dairy Interactive LLC. and Language Links, LLC. Wall shared five essential principles for facility managers to work with their teams most effectively in this open-forum discussion.

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE: Dr. Scott Nordstrom of Merck Animal Health talked with calf and heifer growers about a new system in disease surveillance called DVMdx. Nordstrom showed how the technology used in smart phones and the digital cloud can now be used for disease surveillance, diagnosis and decision making.

FEDERAL POLICY: Charlie Garrison of The Garrison Group provided an update on the Farm Bill, immigration reform, tax reform, international trade agreements, environmental and renewable energy policy and the impact of these policies on the dairy industry.

PRODUCER EXPERIENCE: Laura Daniels of Heartwood Farm, Brett Barlass of Yosemite Dairy and Lane Sollenberger of Dream Farms shared

their experiences and learned knowledge from managing their calf operations in an open-forum Q&A presentation.

HEIFER BREEDING STRATEGIES AND GENOMICS: Dr. Kim Egan of Genex Cooperative and Tami Smith of Neogen Corporation shared new trends in genomic data and strategies for applying the new data into herd management in a pair of classroom-style presentations. The two agreed that there are economic and genetic advantages to utilizing genomics in the herd.

BREEDING AGE: There are many factors to consider when deciding if a heifer is ready to breed, said David Schroeffer of Alta Genetics. Factors including age, size and heifer health and tips for reaching breeding time sooner were discussed with the group.

3X/DAY FEEDING: Dr. Don Sockett of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory shared results from a field trial he lead. The data shows benefits in calf growth, starter intake and long-term calf health for calves fed milk replacer 3-times per day versus 2-times per day, with calves fed 3-times per day entering the milking string earlier.

FEED TRANSITIONS: Successful programs have first calf heifers milking at 85 percent of the mature cows in the herd, said Dan Schnell of United Cooperative, explaining that doubling birth weight in the first 56 days can help achieve this goal. In a hands-on presentation, Schnell showed the difference in rumen papillae growth for calves fed to a higher plane of nutrition from day one and shared tips on when to transition from milk to grain to hay.

FROM THE FIELD: Debbie Schulte

"As a herd manager on our 650 cow farm and assisting with the calves, we are considering changing our housing and feeding system for calves from birth through about 4 months of age. I was interested in attending the different farm tour stops at the conference to gain some information on housing, and particularly the group feeding of calves. There is a lot of new technology and it sounds fascinating. It also sounds like it would be more labor-saving, so I wanted a chance to gain more information on those topics.

The different educational sessions were very good. I particularly enjoyed Tom Wall, who talked about employee management. The producer panels where we could communicate back and forth with the panelists, ask questions and kind of moderate the sessions ourselves were excellent. Overall, it was a conference that I could gain more education and learn new things, and I found it very interesting and educational."

-Debbie Schulte, L&R Dairy
Smithville, OH



Van Rossum awarded \$1,000 scholarship



A strong desire to learn is one of the many strengths that Lea Van Rossum, the 2014 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association scholarship recipient embodies. Van Rossum's ability to apply what she learns in the classroom at the University of River Falls and apply it outside of the classroom bodes well for her future contributions in the dairy industry, says Dr. Duane Wachhols, professor emeritus of animal science at the University of River Falls.

A junior at the University of River Falls Van Rossum is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Animal Science with a Meat Animal emphasis and a science option, along with a minor in chemistry. After graduation, Van Rossum plans to pursue a career as a nutritionist and hopes to one day manage a calf operation focusing on dairy beef or veal calves.

Currently Van Rossum is employed as a calf feeder at Jacobs Brothers in Greenleaf, Wis., where she assists in feeding 300 dairy beef calves' milk and grain. In addition Van Rossum assists with calf health, dehorning, banding and ear-tagging.

"I look forward to participating in events and programs that the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association sponsors," says Van Rossum. "I also look forward to reading new research and learning about new techniques that will help improve calf management and the dairy industry. I am excited to learn from the DCHA as well as possibly one day sharing any research I may have completed with the DCHA and passing this information along to future generations of farmers."

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*.