

3 open minutes

with **Jack Banker**

Incoming President
Dairy Calf & Heifer Association



Progressive Dairyman Editor Emily Caldwell recently talked with Jack Banker, 2013-2014 president of the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association. Banker opened up about recent changes to the organization and goals going into 2014.

Q What are some major goals of DCHA going into 2014?

A BANKER: One of the things we're in the process of doing is revising and updating our strategic plan. We want to return to our founding vision of making the organization valuable to anyone who raises dairy calves and heifers. We want to explore ongoing efforts to educate our members on how dairy calves and heifers are raised and how our members raising them can increase their profit and success. In the past several years, we've fallen away from our original goals when our organization was first created. So we're refocusing ourselves to get back to those goals we set forth originally.

Q Tell me about the decision to collaborate with Filament Marketing for the association's management.

A BANKER: Even before I took over as president and vice president, I met with some of our board members, and we met with different dairy organizations in the past year. We felt that we had ventured too far away from the dairy industry, and we were spending the majority of our time trying to make enough money to pay our management service fees. We needed an organization that could help us connect with the dairy industry and our potential members. The executive board met with Filament Marketing, and their whole team was very dairy-oriented and dairy knowledgeable. They have a good core group of people who know the dairy industry. Also, their founder has been a member of DCHA since its inception, and he has a great commitment for our organization. After that first meeting, we just felt that they had everything we need to change our organization for the better.

Q What are your plans for World Dairy Expo?

A BANKER: We'll have a booth in the New Holland Trade Center (TC 905) to exhibit some of our changes to DCHA. Traditionally, the executive committee and board would meet at Expo and spend our days in

meetings. It really inhibited our ability to communicate with membership, potential membership and allied industry people at Expo. This year, our meeting will be a day earlier. We'll meet and accomplish what we need to do there, and then we'll spend a lot of our time with allied industry and potential members at Expo. We're also contacting current members to work our booth and explain some of the advantages they found belonging to DCHA and how it helped them increase profitability on their operations. We're looking to pour everything out there at Expo and carry it onto our 2014 conference in Green Bay, April 1-3, 2014.

Q What can you tell me about the conference? Why will it be exciting?

A BANKER: One of the things I think will be very exciting is that we're associating it with the Packers organization – and even past members of the team. Many people know Mr. Donald Driver, but they may not realize the parallels his life has with what DCHA has gone through – and so we have decided he is the perfect keynote speaker for this history-making DCHA conference. Additionally, a lot of effort will be directed to repositioning DCHA to the forefront of the calf and heifer arena, so we're looking at networking opportunities and on-farm visits. Our conference committee is well-established in their plans and they're working on finalizing the agenda. We want to stimulate producer-to-producer interaction, learning and information-exchanging opportunities. We want to focus our content, our speakers and venue on being something different than we've ever had before. Something producers feel they should attend based on the opportunity to gain insight and experiences. We're trying to create a revolutionary, powerful draw at this conference.

Q How can calf and heifer growers get more involved in your organization?

A BANKER: Our challenge to them is to take notice of what we're doing to expand. We want to do more training, and we want our programs and services to be carefully reviewed and enhanced to help our members make their operations very profitable. We're refocusing the organization's priorities and our role as the industry's primary source of

information and leadership-management development related to calf and heifer raising.

We're working to set up tours and training seminars where operations can send their employees to visually see and experience hands-on learning of various management practices. That's the kind of thing we're working on to train our members and their employees.

Q How can industry professionals get more involved in your organization?

A BANKER: As we move forward, allied industry professionals are going to be important to us. We're going to be working with them to provide the rest of our membership with cutting-edge information in the calf and heifer-raising industry.

Positioning the allied industry to producers at the conference is very important. We want to allow them to learn from customers and prospects and be able to discuss their products, services and research. We're also exploring new sponsorship opportunities for the conference.

Q What are the next steps you envision for developing the Gold Standards?

A BANKER: We have an active committee looking at all the Gold Standards and updating them. There are standards we need to raise

the bar on and standards we need to do a better job of helping our members attain. We want to make sure our members understand the Gold Standards, that they're trained to reach those standards and that by reaching those standards they will influence their cash flow and make money on their operations. This will always be an ongoing process.

Q What do you think is the number one challenge facing calf and heifer growers today?

A BANKER: Feed costs across the nation. And certainly it's not only the calf and heifer growers faced with high feed and land prices, but also the people they serve – the dairy industry. The profit line for raising an animal is very marginal right now because it costs almost as much to raise the animal as the animal is worth. There's a very fine line of a chance to advance your operation.

Q What are some little-known opportunities available to calf and heifer growers from the association?

A BANKER: The biggest thing is an opportunity to network, especially at the conference. Many times we have members get together and confer on different ideas they're using to raise their heifers. I think DCHA has done an excellent job of making that a focus. **PD**

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