

QUARTER 1 | 2020

HEIFER NOTES

Growing Our Future™



DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION



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SHAPING
the **FUTURE**

Madison, WI ♦ April 7-9

2020 DCHA Conference: Shaping the Future

Gain hands-on experience and valuable insights

Save the dates April 7-9 to attend the 2020 Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) Conference, in the Exhibition Center at the Alliant Energy Center, Madison Wis. The conference attracts hundreds of custom calf and heifer growers, dairy producers, researchers, academia, veterinarians and allied industry partners.

On April 7, the conference kicks off with an optional tour to Larson Acres, Evansville, Wis. In addition, Jennifer Van Os, University of Wisconsin (UW) assistant professor and extension animal welfare specialist, will discuss animal welfare benefits of social (pair/group) rearing. Plus, Terri Ollivett, UW School of Veterinary Medicine assistant professor, will address calf pneumonia and ventilation.

On April 8, Matt Rush, a decorated public speaker, delivers the keynote address, "There's a snake in my bumper!" Rush says that occasionally in life, there are snakes lying in wait for you. There may even be people who know they are there, but don't bother telling you. There may even be people who consistently push your buttons. How do you handle them? "The reality is that the majority of us are perfectly

content to simply do our jobs than to tell anyone who we are, why we do what we do, and more importantly, why it matters to them," said Rush. "The sad truth is, in the absence of our voices, those who don't know us, don't understand us or don't like us are redefining who we are. No matter your profession, you must be viable, valuable and visible to remain successful and avoid the snakes and the button pushers!"

Breakout session speakers scheduled for the conference include:

- Chris Chase, South Dakota State University
- John Ellis, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan
- Sarah Adcock, University of California, Davis
- Matt Rush, inspirational speaker and farm boy
- Grant Crawford, Merck Animal Health
- Gavin Staley, Diamond V Mills
- Michael Steele, University of Guelph
- Jason Lombard, U.S. Department of Agriculture Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health

In addition, the conference offers two breakout sessions that feature producer panels. One panel will focus on dairy x beef and the other will focus on group/paired housing.

Rounding out the general session program are Emily Yeiser Stepp, senior director of The National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program, and Don Höglund, owner of Dairy Stockmanship Company. Stepp will address FARM and how it relates to DCHA's Gold Standards and Höglund will discuss calf handling.

Höglund will conduct an optional post-conference session – demonstrating calf handling techniques.

DCHA negotiated a group rate of \$179 per night (plus applicable taxes and fees) with the Sheraton Madison Hotel, located east of the Alliant Energy Center. Visit bit.ly/DCHAhotel2020 or call 608-251-2300 to reserve a room. Mention that you will be attending the DCHA conference to get the group rate, which is available until March 16. Make your reservation soon, before the room block fills, which may be prior to March 16.



2020

Annual Conference

DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION

NEED TO BOOK ACCOMMODATIONS?

Reserve a room in DCHA's room block at the Sheraton Madison Hotel. Book online at bit.ly/DCHAhotel2020 or call (608) 251-2300.

2-year-old cows are your cornerstone

Keep calf growth momentum going by hitting key check points.

By Mike Messman, Cargill dairy technical services manager

We're learning more and more about how the production standard set by 2-year-old cows sets a "ceiling" for the herd. Gavin Staley, a veterinarian and technical service specialist with Diamond V, has found after evaluating thousands of records that a herd whose 2-year-old cows peak at 75 pounds of milk (daily production) will not be capable of reaching an average herd milk production of 85 pounds (daily production). Furthermore, those that peak low won't ever catch up. Staley finds that each pound of peak milk could be worth 200 to 250 pounds more milk for the whole lactation.

So, how are you treating the animals that are the cornerstone of your dairy? Evaluate these three key areas for success.

Age at first calving

Examining the lactation data of heifers will discern whether age at first calving goals match up with calf and heifer feeding programs. In a

large herd data review, we've seen lifetime production differences of almost 8,000 pounds of milk more for Holsteins that calved at 23 months rather than 21 months, and almost 11,200 pounds of milk for crosses calving at 25 months rather than 21 months. It doesn't take long to recoup an extra month or two on feed with that kind of production.

Calf nutrition

Research done by Mike Van Amburgh at Cornell University found that calves that are fed a denser nutrient diet in the form of milk and milk replacer prior to weaning yielded more than 950 pounds more milk after calving. Equally as important is a calf's access to fresh feed and water. Offering calves the right starter means giving them the digestible fiber, fermentable carbohydrates and amino acids their rumen needs to produce nutrients for growth. Providing a feed balanced for amino acids will promote lean, efficient growth with no wasted protein.

Heifer checkups

Keep the growth momentum going by hitting some key check points. Fifty-five percent of the herd's average mature bodyweight is optimal for pre-breeding heifers. A springer ready to calve should weigh 95 percent of her mature body weight and at post-calving should

weigh 85 percent of her mature body weight. For reference, mature body weight is equal to a third-lactation cow that is 80 to 120 days in milk. A heifer's milk production is reduced by 7 pounds for every pound she still needs to grow to reach the 85 percent benchmark.



Dystocia calves need more than our everyday management

Getting a calf to breathe is foremost, but treating hypoxia-induced acidosis is just as paramount in putting dystocia calves on the road to success.

By Nathan Upham, TechMix ruminant technical leader

If you raise cattle, you likely know about and have dealt with dystocia – even, if perhaps, you don't know it by that name. In simple terms, dystocia is calving difficulty. Dams that experience dystocia have a greater risk of retained placenta, metritis and a greater number of days open, compared with unaided calving events. Heifer calves born requiring assistance were found to have a significantly increased risk of scours, respiratory disease and mortality in the first 120 days of life (Lombard et al., 2007).

One of the underlying reasons for this heightened risk of calfood disease is likely due to hypoxia – a shortage of oxygen. Symptoms of hypoxic neonates include a weak to absent suckle reflex, difficulty maintaining sternal recumbency (upright) and requiring more time to stand (Dufty and Sloss, 1977). Once the calf is breathing, the common assumption is that this calf is now equivalent to its contemporaries that were delivered without complication. This could not be further from the truth.

During a normal birth, the calf will exit the womb with about 80

percent O₂ blood saturation and very quickly progress to 98 to 100 percent O₂. The dystocia calf by definition will have a greater amount of time between loss of maternal blood supply and successful respiration; this causes blood oxygen levels to drop. This time gap causes the dystocia calf to enter a state of anerobic metabolism, causing a lactic acid buildup. The lactic acid buildup causes a blood pH change.

Dystocia calves likely require longer amounts of time to fully oxygenate their blood, due to the deficit created by the prolonged disruption from maternal blood supply and successful respiration. Furthermore, calves with lower blood oxygen levels have an impaired ability to absorb colostral antibodies – heightening the risk of passive transfer failure. This counters a practice that is often observed on farms. Calves that appear weak and lethargic are often given colostrum very quickly following birth in an effort to perk them up. It could also be deduced that colostrum absorption could be improved by slightly delaying colostrum

administration, allowing the dystocia calf more time to fully oxygenate.

Calves that survive dystocia need to be celebrated but also treated with an understanding that they went through a great metabolic challenge. Those calves need more

than our everyday management to allow them to be more than a statistic of morbidity or mortality. Getting the calf to breathe is foremost, but treating the hypoxia-induced acidosis is just as paramount in putting dystocia calves on the road to success.



DCHA offers \$1,000 scholarship

Are you a college student and a Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (DCHA) member? Or, are you a college student and your parent/legal guardian is a DCHA member? If you answered yes, then apply for DCHA's \$1,000 scholarship.

Through this program, DCHA invests in the dairy industry's future by offering financial support to students focused on careers in agriculture. "Education is the backbone to fostering a successful and sustainable dairy industry," says T.J. McClure, DCHA board president. "Today's students are tomorrow's producers, veterinarians, advisers and consultants. We are proud to offer a \$1,000 scholarship to a deserving

student who plans to shape the future of the calf and heifer segment of the dairy industry." The annual DCHA scholarship is awarded to a student currently enrolled in an agriculture-related program at an accredited college or university. Applicants must have completed at least one year of post high school education. An individual may only receive the scholarship once.

Go to: calfandheifer.org/scholarship for more information and to apply. Applications must be received by end of business day, February 20, 2020. E-mail completed applications to jodee@calfandheifer.org.

TO APPLY FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP, APPLICANTS MUST:

- ☑ Be a member of DCHA; or the son, daughter or legal dependent of a DCHA member
- ☑ Have completed at least one year of post high school education
- ☑ Be an enrolled student in good standing at an accredited college or university
- ☑ Be enrolled in a field of agriculture (e.g., dairy science, animal science, veterinary science, agricultural technical program, ag communications) or in a course of study with relevance to agriculture; preference is given to dairy calf/heifer-related fields

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Meet board members John Balbian, Terri Ollivett

Editor's Note: A previous issue of Heifer Notes featured two new board members – Jamie Franken and Kerry Nieuwkoop-Yanez. This issue features Dairy Calf and Heifer Association's two more new board members – John Balbian and Theresa "Terri" Ollivett.

John Balbian

An innovator and early adopter, John Balbian of Amsterdam, N.Y., milks 400 cows, raises 1,600 heifers and manages a sheep operation. Seven years ago, he embarked on raising calves with auto feeders – from 1 day to 64 days old. "The key is quality colostrum," said Balbian. "As long as a calf receives adequate colostrum in the first 1.5 hours, she does fine on an auto feeder."

In addition to his own calves, Balbian raises calves for a 1,000-cow dairy. When those calves are on his farm, he retains ownership, which involves a buy/sell back relationship. Balbian grew up on a dairy farm and earned his bachelor's degree

in agricultural economics from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Albany (New York). In addition to farming, he is a dairy nutrition consultant and owns two technology patents. The patents involve activity monitoring and rumination.

Besides dairy cattle, Balbian raises 600 Katahdin sheep for their meat. He has room to raise up to 3,000 Katahdin sheep. "I really like raising these sheep that reach 60 pounds by 10 weeks of age," said Balbian. His sheep lamb every eight months. Orphaned lambs drink from an auto feeder – similar to his dairy calves.

Balbians's DCHA involvement dates back to the organization's early days when it was the Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association. "DCHA brings great ideas to members and it oversees a missed opportunity in the dairy industry," he said. "As a dairy producer and industry

consultant, I bring both sides to the DCHA leadership table."

Balbians and his wife, Sara, have three sons – Nolan, 11; Ian, 8; and Reid, 6.

Terri Ollivett

A New York native, Ollivett serves as DCHA's academia director and is an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Veterinary Medicine. She earned her bachelor's degree from Siena College in 2000, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Cornell University in 2004 and doctorate degree in epidemiology from the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ont., Canada, in 2014.

Prior to joining UW's School of Veterinary Medicine, Ollivett worked as an associate veterinarian in northern New York and as a large animal internal medicine resident at the Equine and Farm Animal Hospital at Cornell University.

Ollivett's research focuses on dairy calves and *Cryptosporidium parvum*. She is an expert in ultrasonography, particularly as it relates to bovine respiratory disease.

"DCHA brings great ideas to members and it oversees a missed opportunity in the dairy industry."

— John Balbian

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DCHA REGIONAL MEETING
OCT 27-29 | Visalia, California



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.