

RESOURCE GUIDE



20



24

DCHA

DAIRY CALF & HEIFER ASSOCIATION

STRONG FOUNDATIONS
for **BRIGHT FUTURES**

April 9-11, 2024 | Westminster, Colorado



Precisely balanced to
help her reach new heights.



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Efficient growth isn't achieved by simply focusing on crude protein. It takes a perfect balance of the amino acids lysine, methionine and threonine to make sure not a single ounce of protein is wasted. That's how HerdFirst products are optimized for efficient growth and improved cost per pound of gain. So you can efficiently feed the future of your herd.

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20:20
MILK REPLACER

22:20
MILK REPLACER

EARLY CALF
MILK REPLACER
22.5:20

24:18
MILK REPLACER

STARTER

TOTAL CALF

GROWER

HEIFER
MINERAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STRONG FOUNDATIONS *for* BRIGHT FUTURES

GENERAL INFORMATION.....	3
AGENDA.....	5
2024 EXHIBITORS.....	11
EXHIBITION HALL MAP.....	18
PROCEEDINGS.....	20
BOARD OF DIRECTORS & COMMITTEE.....	Inside Back Cover
SPONSORS.....	Back Cover



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with #DCHA2024.**

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Elanco

WELCOME!

Welcome to the 2024 Dairy Calf & Heifer Association Annual Conference and Trade Show.

Themed “Strong Foundations for Bright Futures,” this year’s event celebrates the industry’s strong foundation and recognizes evolving calf, heifer and beef-cross management strategies, technologies and business practices — all pointing toward a more sustainable future.



REGISTRATION

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

6:30 a.m.—5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

6:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

6:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

TRADE SHOW

The conference trade show will kick off with a reception Tuesday evening and remain open through 9:55 a.m. on April 11. Listed below are the specific trade show activities and breaks.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

4:30–6:00 p.m. Trade Show Reception

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

9:45–10:00 a.m. Trade Show Open

2:15–2:30 p.m. Trade Show Open

4:45–6:15 p.m. Trade Show Reception

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

8:50–9:55 a.m. Trade Show Open



A good start for her
means a good
future for you.

Calf Wellness

CALF WELLNESS. WHERE THE DIFFERENCE BEGINS.

A good start for calves leads to healthy, productive cows in your herd. We help make sure it's a great start with our Calf Wellness solutions: prediction, prevention, treatment and expertise that gives your calves the best possible future.

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FREE GUIDE



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CONFERENCE AGENDA PROGRAMA DE CONFERENCIA

All times listed are Mountain time. Todos los horarios son indicados en horario de montaña.

ALL SESSIONS WILL HAVE LIVE SPANISH INTERPRETATION/TODAS LAS SESIONES SERÁN TRADUCIDAS SIMULTÁNEAMENTE A ESPAÑOL

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

MARTES, 9 DE ABRIL

6:30 a.m. REGISTRATION OPENS
INICIO DE REGISTRO

OPTIONAL TOURS / TOURS OPCIONALES

5280 CATTLE COMPANY Ault, CO	FELDPAUSCH HOLSTEINS Fort Morgan, CO	FIVE RIVERS CATTLE FEEDING Kersey, CO
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PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS SESIONES PRE-CONFERENCIA

1:00 p.m. Liderazgo: desafíos y oportunidades (SPA/ESP)
LEGACY BALLROOM
Leadership Tailwinds and Headwinds
RODOLFO NAVA, NM NEWCAN
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Elanco Animal Health

2:00 p.m. Evidencia Respalada por la Ciencia: Manejo del Calostro (SPA/ESP)
LEGACY BALLROOM
Science-backed Evidence: Colostrum Management
LAUTARO ROSTOLL CANGIANO,
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

3:00 p.m. The Use of Essential Oils and Oligosaccharides in Neonatal Calves
LEGACY BALLROOM
Uso de Aceites Esenciales y Oligosacáridos en Becerros Neonatos
DAVID CASPER, RALCO, INC.
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Ralco, Inc.

4:00 p.m. Crypto? Rota? Corona? When IgG isn't Enough
LEGACY BALLROOM
Crypto? Rota? Corona? Cuando IgG no es Suficiente
DREW VERMEIRE, NOURICHE NUTRITION
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Arkion Life Sciences

5:00–6:30 p.m. RECEPTION IN THE TRADE SHOW
WB III, IV
RECEPCIÓN EN LA FERIA COMERCIAL

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

MIÉRCOLES, 10 DE ABRIL

7:00–7:55 a.m. BREAKFAST / DESAYUNO
LEGACY BALLROOM
SHAWN JONES, PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ARKION LIFE SCIENCES
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Arkion Life Sciences

GENERAL SESSION / SESIÓN GENERAL

8:00–8:50 a.m. Building Your Mental Health Toolbox
LEGACY BALLROOM
Construyendo una Caja de Herramientas para tu Salud Mental
ASHLEY MACHADO, M WELL CONSULTING
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Merck Animal Health

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE) OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

8:55–9:45 a.m. WET CALF/WEANING TRACK
WB I
BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE
Best Practices for Disease Prevention
Las Mejores Prácticas de Manejo para la Prevención de Enfermedades
GEOF SMITH, ZOETIS
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Zoetis

8:55–9:45 a.m. POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK
WB II
BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN
Optimizing Dairy Heifer Reproductive Management Strategies
Optimizando las Estrategias del Manejo Reproductivo de la Vaquilla Lechera
JP MARTINS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

8:55–9:45 a.m. BEEF CROSS TRACK
COTTON CREEK
BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE
Calf Veterinarian Perspective on Liver Abscesses
Perspectiva de un Veterinario de Becerros en Abscesos Hepáticos
TAYLOR ENGLE, FOUR STAR VETERINARY SERVICE
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: MB Nutrition



Good Things Come in **Small Packages**

EggTek[®]-C supports calf health with a blanket of IgY antibodies unmatched in the industry.



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#1
to learn more.

9:45–10:00 a.m. MORNING BREAK / Descanso Matutino
WB III, IV *Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Anpario and DairyMax*

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE) OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

10:00–10:50 a.m. WET CALF/WEANING TRACK
BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE
WB I
Best Practices for Disease Prevention
Las Mejores Prácticas de Manejo para la
Prevención de Enfermedades
GEOF SMITH, ZOETIS
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Zoetis

10:00–10:50 a.m. POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK
BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN
WB II
**Optimizing Dairy Heifer Reproductive
Management Strategies**
Optimizando las Estrategias del Manejo
Reproductivo de la Vaquilla Lechera
JP MARTINS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

10:00–10:50 a.m. BEEF CROSS TRACK
BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE
COTTON CREEK
Calf Veterinarian Perspective on Liver Abscesses
Perspectiva de un Veterinario de
Becerras en Abscesos Hepáticos
TAYLOR ENGLE, FOUR STAR VETERINARY SERVICE
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: MB Nutrition

**11:00 a.m. LUNCH AND DCHA ANNUAL
BUSINESS MEETING**
LEGACY BALLROOM
ALMUERZO Y DCHA REUNIÓN
EMPRESARIAL ANUAL
**TERESIA MAINA, SR. RESEARCH SCIENTIST,
IMMUNOLOGY, CARGILL**
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Cargill

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE) OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

12:30–1:20 p.m. WET CALF/WEANING TRACK
BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE
WB I
**Transition Milk: What is it and Should All Calves
be Fed Some Form of ‘Transition Milk’?**
Leche de Transición: ¿Qué es y Deberían todos los becerros
ser alimentados con alguna forma de ‘Leche de Transición’?
MICHAEL BALLOU, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Milk Specialties

12:30–1:20 p.m. POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK
BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN
WB II
She’s Weaned. Now What?
Está Destetada. ¿Ahora Qué?
**THOMAS TYLUTKI, AGRICULTURAL MODELING
AND TRAINING SYSTEMS LLC**

12:30–1:20 p.m. BEEF CROSS TRACK
BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE
COTTON CREEK
**Beef on Dairy Cattle: Industry
Benefits and Opportunities**
Ganado Cruzado de Carne: Beneficios y
Oportunidades para la Industria
NICK HARDCASTLE, CARGILL
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Cargill

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE) OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

1:25–2:15pm WET CALF/WEANING TRACK
BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE
WB I
**Transition Milk: What is it and Should All Calves
be Fed Some Form of ‘Transition Milk’?**
Leche de Transición: ¿Qué es y Deberían todos los becerros
ser alimentados con alguna forma de ‘Leche de Transición’?
MICHAEL BALLOU, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Milk Specialties

1:25–2:15pm POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK
BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN
WB II
She’s Weaned. Now What?
Está Destetada. ¿Ahora Qué?
**THOMAS TYLUTKI, AGRICULTURAL MODELING
AND TRAINING SYSTEMS LLC**



The quality your calves want.
THE PERFORMANCE YOU NEED.

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www.esmilco.com

1:25–2:15pm
COTTON CREEK

BEEF CROSS TRACK
BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE

Beef on Dairy Cattle: Industry Benefits and Opportunities

Ganado Cruzado de Carne: Beneficios y Oportunidades para la Industria

NICK HARDCASTLE, CARGILL

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Cargill

2:15–2:30 p.m.
WB III, IV

AFTERNOON BREAK
DESCANSO VESPERTINO

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: DairyMax

GENERAL SESSION / SESIÓN GENERAL

2:30–3:20 p.m.
LEGACY
BALLROOM

Calf Care & Quality Assurance Program – Best Management Guidelines for the Calf-raising Sector

Programa Calf Care & Quality Assurance – Lineamientos para las Buenas Prácticas del Sector de Crianza de Becerros

MODERATOR/MODERADORES: EMMA MULVANEY, BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAMS

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: TERA BARNHARDT, HERITAGE VET PARTNERS, AUSTIN FLORES, GRIMMIUS CATTLE COMPANY, AND RODOLFO NAVA, NM NEWCAN

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: First Defense/Immucell

3:30–4:45 p.m.
LEGACY
BALLROOM

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
MESA REDONDA

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: KENDALL WASSENAAR, DCHA BOARD MEMBER

4:45–6:15 p.m.
WB III, IV

RECEPTION IN THE TRADE SHOW
RECEPCIÓN EN LA FERIA COMERCIAL

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Esmilco

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

JUEVES, 11 DE ABRIL

7:00–7:55 a.m.

BREAKFAST / DESAYUNO

LEGACY
BALLROOM

MITCH HOCKETT, DIRECTOR OF FARMFIT
PRODUCTS, STGENETICS

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: STgenetics

GENERAL SESSION / SESIÓN GENERAL

8:00–8:50 a.m.

Exploring the Economics of Raising Replacement Heifers

LEGACY
BALLROOM

Explorando la Economía de Criar Becerras de Reemplazo

KEVIN DHUYVETTER, ELANCO ANIMAL HEALTH

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: Elanco Animal Health

8:50–9:55 a.m.

TRADE SHOW / FERIA COMERCIAL

WB III, IV

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: DairyMax

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE)

OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

10:00–10:50 a.m.

WET CALF/WEANING TRACK

BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE

WB I

Fostering Early Calf Health for Lifetime Sustainability

Fomentando la Salud Temprana del Becerro para una Sustentabilidad de Por Vida

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: BRIAN WESEMANN,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: KOLTON KREITEL, FULLMER
CATTLE COMPANY, J HALL, HALL'S CALF RANCH, AND
JESUS SEGURA, BARRINGTON & HIBRIGHTON DAIRY

10:00–10:50 a.m.

POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK

BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN

WB II

Best Management Practices to Foster Healthy, Efficient Post-weaned Heifers

Las Mejores Prácticas de Manejo para Fomentar Vaquillas Destetadas Sanas y Eficientes

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: JASON ANDERSON,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: VANCE KELLS, CIRCLE BAR HEIFER
RANCH, LLC, DOUG SCHOLTEN, BRIGHTWATER CATTLE
COMPANY, AND JAMIE FRANKEN, CITY VIEW FARM

10:00–10:50 a.m.

COTTON CREEK

BEEF CROSS TRACK

BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE

Building Your Best Beef Cross from Birth to Butcher

Construyendo la Mejor Cruza de Ganado de Carne desde la Concepción hasta el Carnicero

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: ELLEN CUSHING,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: RODOLFO NAVA, NM
NEWCAN, NICK HARDCASTLE, CARGILL, AND TAYLOR
ENGLE, FOUR STAR VETERINARY SERVICE

Sponsored by/Patrocinado por: MB Nutrition

TRACK OPTIONS (SELECT ONE)

OPCIONES DE BLOQUES (SELECCIONE UNO)

10:55–11:45 a.m.

WB I

WET CALF/WEANING TRACK

BLOQUE PREDESTETE/DESTETE

Fostering Early Calf Health for Lifetime Sustainability

Fomentando la Salud Temprana del Becerro para una Sustentabilidad de Por Vida

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: BRIAN WESEMANN,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: KOLTON KREITEL, FULLMER
CATTLE COMPANY, J HALL, HALL'S CALF RANCH, AND
JESUS SEGURA, BARRINGTON & HIBRIGHTON DAIRY

10:55–11:45 a.m.

WB II

POST-WEANED/REPRODUCTION TRACK

BLOQUE POST-DESTETE/REPRODUCCIÓN

Best Management Practices to Foster Healthy, Efficient Post-weaned Heifers

Las Mejores Prácticas de Manejo para Fomentar Vaquillas Destetadas Sanas y Eficientes

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: JASON ANDERSON,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: VANCE KELLS, CIRCLE BAR HEIFER
RANCH, LLC, DOUG SCHOLTEN, BRIGHTWATER CATTLE
COMPANY, AND JAMIE FRANKEN, CITY VIEW FARM

10:55–11:45 a.m.

COTTON CREEK

BEEF CROSS TRACK

BLOQUE BECERROS CRUZADOS DE CARNE

Building Your Best Beef Cross from Birth to Butcher

Construyendo la Mejor Cruza de Ganado de Carne desde la Concepción hasta el Carnicero

MODERATOR/MODERADOR: ELLEN CUSHING,
DCHA BOARD MEMBER

PANELISTS/PANELISTAS: RODOLFO NAVA, NM NEWCAN,
NICK HARDCASTLE, CARGILL, AND TAYLOR ENGLE,
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2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

AXIOTA ANIMAL HEALTH

BOOTH 38

Aaron Hund

ahund@axiota.com

2809 E Harmony Rd #190

Fort Collins, CO 80528

970-492-5924



4D AG WORLD

BOOTH 42

Elizabeth DeVries

office@4dagworld.com

16650 Robin Road

Canyon, TX 79015

806-557-8406



ACEPSIS, LLC

BOOTH 26, 27

Russ Cavanagh

rcavanagh@acepsis.com

9534 Blue Heron Drive

Middleton, WI 53562

519-373-9605



ADA ENTERPRISES, INC.

BOOTH 40, 41

Paul Schumacher

paul@adaent.net

305 Enterprise Drive

Northwood, IA 50459

641-324-1093



AGRI-PLASTICS

BOOTH 46, 47

Skip Wiswell

skip@agri-plastics.net

701 East Elm Street

Sidney, NE 69162

308-254-1137



ANPARIO INC.

BOOTH 19

John Brinn

john.brinn@anpario.com

PO Box 5131

Spartanburg, SC 29304

336-583-5760



ARKION LIFE SCIENCES, LLC

BOOTH 1

Shawn Jones

sjones@arkionls.com

207 Gilman Street

Verona, WI 53593

302-504-7413



ARM & HAMMER

BOOTH 30

Patty Sinclair

patty.sinclair@churchdwright.com

500 Charles Ewing Blvd

Ewing, NJ 08628

612-360-3463



CALF CARE QUALITY ASSURANCE

BOOTH 15

Julia Herman

jherman@beef.org

9110 East Nichols Ave, #300

Centennial, CO 80112

970-222-7563



2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

CALF STAR, LLC

BOOTH 11, 12

Willis Higdon

info@calfstar.com

4324 North County road P
New Franken, WI 54229

920-680-5976



CALF-TEL

BOOTH 35, 36, 37

Tyler Bell

tylerbell@hampelcorp.com

W194 N11551 McCormick Dr.
Germantown, WI 53022

262-532-9094



CAMBRIDGE TECHNOLOGIES

BOOTH 24

Robert Rust

rrust@cambridgetechnologies.com

1525 Bioscience Drive
Worthington, MN 56187

785-477-4516



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CARGILL ANIMAL NUTRITION

BOOTH 16

Ann Horack

Ann_Horack@cargill.com

15407 McGinty Rd W

Wayzata, MN 55391

815-762-3054



CASPER'S CALF RANCH, LLC

BOOTH 18

David Casper

david.casper10@jcwif.com

4890 West Lily Creek Road

Freeport, IL 61032

815-535-7555

Casper's Calf Ranch
No code

DAIRY TECH, LLC

BOOTH 14

Dennis Anderson

dennis.anderson@dairytechllc.com

10027 CR 70

Windsor, CO 80550

866-384-2697



DBC AG PRODUCTS

BOOTH 44

David Mathes

dmathes@danielbaumco.com

1382 Arcadia Road, Suite 102

Lancaster, PA 17601

717-951-8520



ELANCO ANIMAL HEALTH

BOOTH 29

Ellen Cushing

ellen.cushing@elancoah.com

507 W Juneau Street

Hustisford, WI 53034

847-421-2719



ENDOVAC ANIMAL HEALTH

BOOTH 48

Erik Vruwink

evruwink@endovac.com

N28193 Sorlie Lane

Arcadia, WI 54612

715-323-3898



FEEDWORKS USA, LTD.

BOOTH 23

Rod Riewer

brandy.clark@tbgnutrition.com

2407 Ashland Ave

Cincinnati, OH 45206

513-276-3217



FIRST DEFENSE / IMMUCELL CORP

BOOTH 49, 50

Kathy Becher

kbecher@immucell.com

56 Evergreen Drive

Portland, ME 04103

800-466-8235



GENOVA LABS, LLC

BOOTH 43

Melanie Huhta

melanie@genovalabs.com

36 South 9th Street

Minneapolis, MN 55402

612-242-7865



2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

HUVEPHARMA

BOOTH 5

Jeff Hall

jeffery.hall@huvepharma.us

525 Westpark

Peachtree City, GA 30269

770-486-7212



KEYAG DISTRIBUTORS

BOOTH 6

Jerre Fender

fender@keyag.com

4525 East 3425 N

Murtaugh, ID 83344

208-432-6602



KUNAFIN 'THE INSECTARY'

BOOTH 13

Blaine Junfin

cristina@kunafin.com

P.O. Box 190

Quemado, TX 78877

830-757-1181



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FULL
OF
CRAP?

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*Marissa Hake, DVM
Calf Vet*

*Learn more at
FirstDefenseCalfHealth.com*

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2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

LAIRD MFG., LLC

BOOTH 31

Steve Lemos

stevel@lairdmfg.com

531 South Hwy. 59

Merced, CA 95341

209-652-9147



MB NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES

BOOTH 3, 4

James Knevelbaard

james@mbfeeds.com

420 Florida Ave SW

Orange City, IA 51041

559-977-6656



MERCK ANIMAL HEALTH

BOOTH 34

Kerry Yanez

kerry.nieuwkoop@merck.com

21680 Road 16

Chowchilla, CA 93610

559-706-5622



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+ PRESPONSE SQ

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GET GREAT OUT.**

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2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

MICROBASICS

BOOTH 7, 8, 9

Mark Kane-Berman

markkb@microbasics.com

2802 Flintrock Trace Ste 363

Austin, TX 78738

858-603-5621



NEOGEN

BOOTH 20

Elizabeth Wonsowski

ewonsowski@neogen.com

944 Nandino Blvd

Lexington, KY 40511

859-254-1221



PEOPLECOR

BOOTH 25

Tom Wall

tom@peoplecor.com

P.O. Box 997

Green Bay, WI 54305

920-737-6602



RALCO

BOOTH 17

Brad Klukas

brad.klukas@ralcoagriculture.com

100 W. College Dr. Box 1083

Marshall, MN 56258

507-337-6954



SELECT SIRES INC.

BOOTH 32, 33

Jill Strangstalien

jstrangstalien@selectsires.com

11740 US Hwy 42S

Plain City, OH 43064

608-778-1491



STGENETICS

BOOTH 2

Amber Dammen Buol

amber.dammen@stgen.com

8137 Forsythia St

Middleton, WI 53562

608-214-4655



2024 TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

STRAUSS FEEDS

BOOTH 10

Dan Catherman

catherman@straussfeeds.com

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Watertown, WI 53098

920-261-7882



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Bret Hobbs

brethobbs@techmixglobal.com

740 Bowman Street
Stewart, MN 55350

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BOOTH 21, 22

Eric Baehler

ericbaehler@coburn.com

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262-473-0320



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BOOTH 28

Jodi Paynter

jodi.paynter@zoetis.com

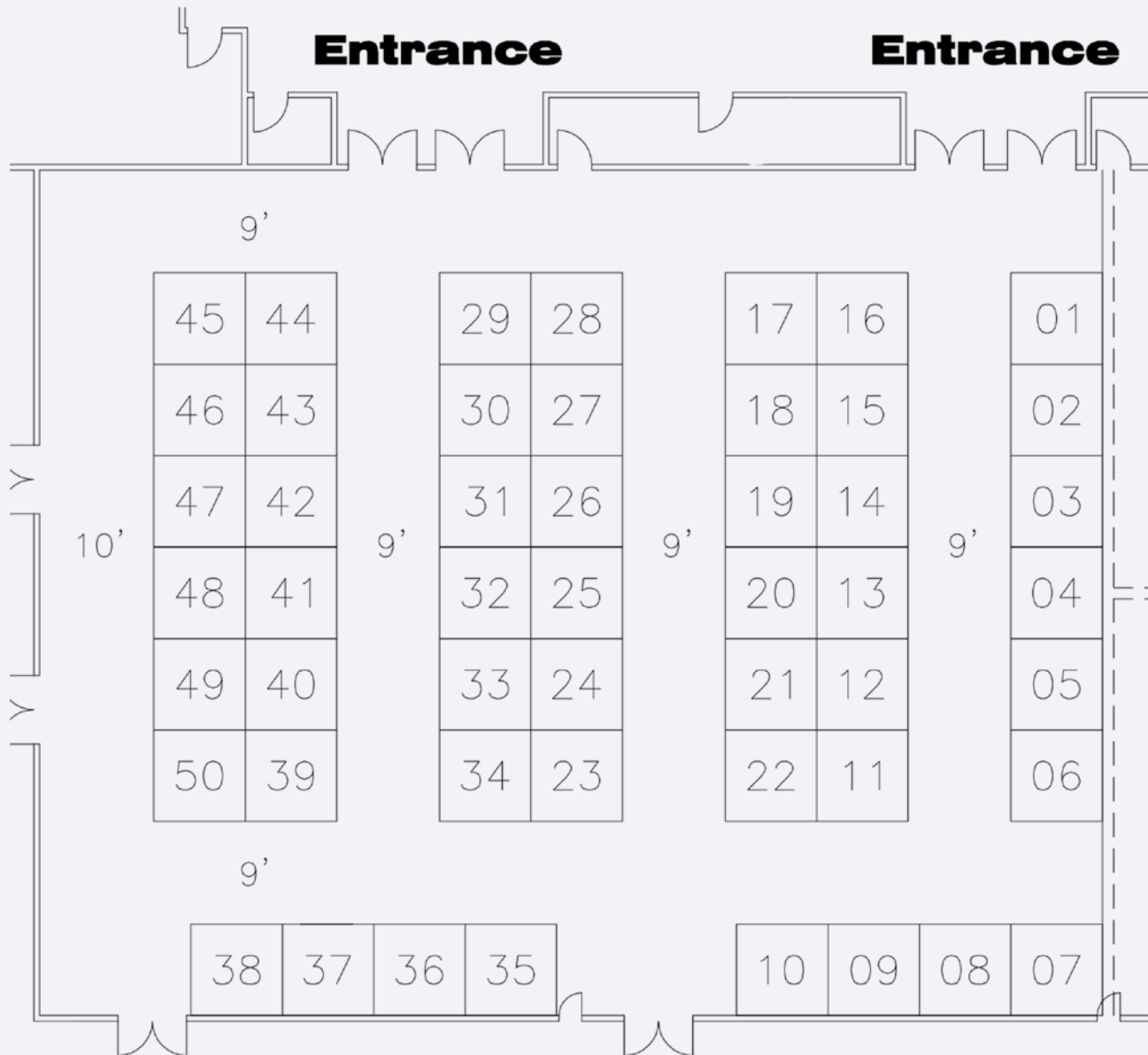
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NOTES

EXHIBITION HALL MAP



EXHIBITORS

4D AG World	42	Cargill Animal Nutrition	16	MB Nutritional Sciences	3, 4
Acepsis, LLC	26, 27	Casper's Calf Ranch, LLC	18	Merck Animal Health	34
ADA Enterprises, Inc.	40, 41	Dairy Tech, LLC	14	MicroBasics	7-9
Agri-Plastics	46, 47	DBC Ag Products	44	NEOGEN	20
Anpario Inc.	19	Elanco Animal Health	29	PeopleCor	25
Arkion Life Sciences, LLC	1	ENDOVAC Animal Health	48	Ralco	17
Arm & Hammer	30	Feedworks USA, Ltd.	23	Select Sires Inc.	32, 33
Axiota Animal Health	38	First Defense/Immucell Corp	49, 50	STgenetics	2
Calf Care Quality Assurance	15	Genova Labs, LLC	43	Strauss Feeds	10
Calf Star LLC	11, 12	Huvepharma	5	TechMix, LLC	45
Calf-Tel	35-37	Key Ag Distributors	6	The Coburn Company Inc.	21, 22
Cambridge Technologies	24	Kunafin 'The Insectary'	13	Zoetis	28
		Laird Mfg. LLC	31		

TRADE SHOW HOURS

The conference trade show will kick off with a reception Tuesday evening and remain open through 9:55 a.m. on April 11.



Best Practices for Disease Prevention

GEOF SMITH, *Zoetis*

She's Weaned. Now What?

T.P. TYLUTKI, *Agricultural
Modeling and Training Systems LLC*

Best Practices for Disease Prevention

GEOF SMITH, *Zoetis*

Heifer calves represent the future of the dairy and therefore management of these animals from birth through weaning should be a high priority on farms. Despite this, calf mortality remains high. The major causes of morbidity and mortality in dairy calves continue to be diarrhea, pneumonia and septicemia. These are largely management diseases that can be prevented by having a good colostrum program in place and maintaining good cleanliness and hygiene on the farm. Risk factors for disease include dirty calving pens, inadequate colostrum ingestion, nursing dirty teats, unsanitary feeding utensils (nipples, bottles), overcrowding, poor housing design, contamination of milk with bacteria, poor ventilation and failure to isolate sick calves. The primary purpose of my DCHA talk is to discuss the three key elements to avoid disease: day 1 calf care, nutrition and minimizing stress around weaning.

Day 1 Calf Care

Proper day 1 calf care includes both maternity pen and colostrum management. Fecal oral transmission is the primary route of infection for most causes of calf diarrhea and many calves are exposed to disease from their dam at birth. Maintaining a clean calving area and prompt removal of the calf are important steps in limiting disease transmission. On dairy farms experiencing problems with neonatal diarrhea, it is not uncommon to find evidence of a high prevalence of pathogens (i.e. *Salmonella* or rotavirus) in the calving area. In the case of *Salmonella*, you can often find significant fecal shedding in postpartum cows. Calves may be exposed to various causes of diarrhea by exposure to manure from the dam following birth when the calf contacts its environment or when calves have contact with the udder while attempting to nurse. It is important to appreciate that significant pathogen exposure can occur within the first few hours of life. In certain areas of the world, dairy cows routinely calve on pasture, whereas calving pens are more common in colder climates. Regardless of the type of maternity area used, control points are directed at minimizing contamination (time cows spend in the pen, choice of bedding material and frequency of bedding changes) and exposure risk (time calves spend in the maternity area).

A good colostrum management program ensures that all calves get an adequate volume of quality colostrum as quickly as possible after birth. This is likely the single most important aspect of dairy heifer management. Despite the emphasis placed on colostrum, surveys suggest that up to 35% of dairy heifers still don't have adequate immunoglobulin concentrations when tested.

Despite the well-documented benefits of colostrum, it should also be pointed out that colostrum can be a significant source of infection for some diseases, including *Salmonella Dublin*. Pooling colostrum increases the risk of *Salmonella* infection by disseminating the organism in a larger colostrum volume and subsequently infecting a larger number of calves. An increase in the incidence of *Salmonella* infections in calves and an earlier onset of clinical signs following increased volume of colostrum administration to newborn calves are consistent with *Salmonella* contamination of colostrum. Control points for reducing the risk of disease transmission associated with the feeding of colostrum include: 1) effective cleaning of equipment used in colostrum collection and storage; 2) avoid pooling colostrum; 3) verify refrigeration units for storing colostrum are working correctly; 4) make sure colostrum is cooled rapidly if not fed immediately; 5) record date of collection on refrigerated colostrum and discard after 2 days; and 6) maintain dedicated equipment for feeding colostrum. Fresh colostrum fed to calves should contain less than 100,000 cfu/mL total bacterial count and less than 10,000 coliforms/mL.

Nutrition

Adequate calf nutrition is critical for host immunity and energy-deprived calves are more likely to have increased morbidity and mortality due to diarrhea. There is a significant amount of new data indicating calves fed at a higher plane of nutrition are more resistant to disease as compared to calves on more conventional milk feeding programs. For example, one study showed that calves fed an accelerated growth milk program (28% protein, 20% fat) maintained hydration, had faster resolution of diarrhea, had increased body weight gain and better feed conversion after experimental challenge with *Cryptosporidium parvum* as compared to calves fed conventional milk replacer (20% protein, 20% fat). While many people have long recognized there was a strong correlation between calf nutrition and rates of disease, we have only recently had data to illustrate the importance of this relationship. With the plethora of new data published in the last five to 10 years, it has been hard to avoid the realization that we have been significantly underfeeding dairy heifers for a long time and that higher planes of nutrition provide multiple benefits.

When assessing nutritional requirements, it is important to factor in seasonal conditions that increase the calf's energy demands. Lack of refrigeration carries significant risk when residual milk from one feeding



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is kept for subsequent feedings. This is particularly important during hot weather when proliferation of bacteria is increased. Pasteurization is also effective at reducing bacterial contamination. When implemented properly, pasteurization provides significant risk management. Inclusion of quality control monitors is important to detect failures in the pasteurization process. Feeding utensils and personnel often play a significant role in transmitting various pathogens among calves. Adequate cleaning and disinfection of feeding utensils is necessary to remove contamination.

Avoiding Stress

Although most people understand the word “stress,” it can be difficult to define. However, it is basically the calf’s physiologic or behavioral response to adverse events in the environment or management system. These responses allow the calf to adapt or cope with the adverse effects causing stress. Things like heat or cold climates, overcrowding, shipping, weaning, dehorning, poor nutrition, erratic feeding schedules and improper handling can all cause stress and make the calf more susceptible to disease. We are learning that stress has a profound effect on the immune system and can dramatically increase disease rates.

A survey sent to beef producers in Western Canada identified the most common risk factors in their opinion for diarrhea outbreaks in calves. The results indicated the greatest risk factors for calf diarrhea were inclement weather (cold), poor ground surface conditions (wet, cold pasture) and overcrowding – all factors that would increase calf stress levels. Many heifer growers or veal operations say that disease exposure is expected and constant. Despite the constant exposure, disease outbreaks seem to be sporadic – often revolving around times of stress.

Recent studies have even found that bacteria can detect stress in the animal and multiply during those periods. The principle is known as “quorum sensing,” where pathogens living in the host at low levels can sense changes in norepinephrine (a hormone produced during stress) and begin to multiply. Although some stress is likely inevitable in raising dairy heifers, this should be kept to a minimum. Providing good nutrition and keeping calves on a consistent feeding schedule will go a long way toward helping mitigate the deleterious effects of stress on calf health.

References available upon request.

She's Weaned. Now What?

T.P. TYLUTKI, *Agricultural Modeling and Training Systems LLC*

Whether you are a dairy producer raising your own heifers or a custom heifer grower, the objectives are the same. Raise a heifer that weighs >80% of mature weight at calving with a body condition score (BCS) around 3, has had minimal insults to give her the best chance of longevity and at a low/reasonable cost. Unfortunately, the low-cost objective typically overwhelms many – resulting in undersized or older heifers at calving. Failure to achieve these objectives reduces her longevity and tends to be more expensive (financially and environmentally).

This paper discusses growth and growth efficiency leading to several feeding options and recommendations.

Growth

Before we can talk about growth, we must ask ourselves what are we trying to achieve? The first step in answering this is what is our target animal. It is well documented that body weight in relation to mature weight represents the ideal method to set growth goals. The relationship also relates to milk production in first-lactation versus mature cows. Thus, it is extremely unfortunate (and frustrating) that very few producers have animal scales. Mature weights vary by herd and over time. An example is data from the Cornell research herd where mature weights averaged 1,472 pounds in 1993. In 2016, this increased to 1,710 pounds – an increase of about 1% per year. Schmidtman et al. (2023) reported positive genetic correlations between milk production and body depth, dairy character and stature. Guinan et al. (2023) reported that, since the introduction of genomics, the generational interval related to genetic gains has decreased more than 50%. In other words, with bulls in service between 1990 and 2010, one generation change took seven or eight years. Since 2015, generational change has averaged three to four years. This is clearly evident as we look at how milk fat and protein have increased rapidly the last several years with many herds averaging >4.2% fat and >90 pounds of daily milk. These rapid changes introduced a challenge: cows have increased in size. What do we use for target weights now?

During post-weaning, there are four discrete growth periods. They are: 6-7 months of age, 7 months through first breeding, first 190 days of gestation and the last 90 days of gestation. Manipulating age at first calving (AFC) focuses on performance up to breeding. Once they are pregnant, there are only 280 days to reach the target weight. Table 1 shows the required average daily gain (ADG), in pounds per day, from weaning through breeding for different AFC and mature weights. As mature weight increases (e.g., 1,400 to 1,600 pounds), target pre-breeding ADG for a

24-month-old AFC increases 0.2 pound per day. As Table 2 shows, for that same change in mature weight, bred heifer ADG also increased 0.2 pound per day. Knowing mature weights is critical for goal setting. Knowing body weights at several points (e.g., birth, weaning [or 90 days], first breeding and calving [or 6-8 weeks pre-calving]) are our performance measures.

Illustrating these phases, we generated metabolizable energy (ME) and metabolizable protein (MP) requirements for growing heifers with a 24-month-old AFC gaining 800 grams per day (1.76 pounds per day), utilizing AMTS.Cattle.Professional. Then, we expressed these requirements per kilogram of predicted dry matter intake (DMI; Figure 1). The discrete growth phases become apparent. Heifers from weaning through 6 or 7 months of age have requirements (on a density basis) similar to cows producing >90 pounds of milk (daily basis). Two- and 3-month-old heifer requirements are the highest of any time in their life. The first two trimesters of pregnancy represent the lowest required density of the heifers' lives – followed by the last trimester when requirements of the conceptus increase exponentially. In Table 2, there are two ADG columns. The first represents what the heifer herself must grow throughout gestation. The second represents the last trimester and is the combination of the heifer and conceptus. If heifers were weighed with scales during the last trimester, ADG calculated represents the heifer and conceptus.

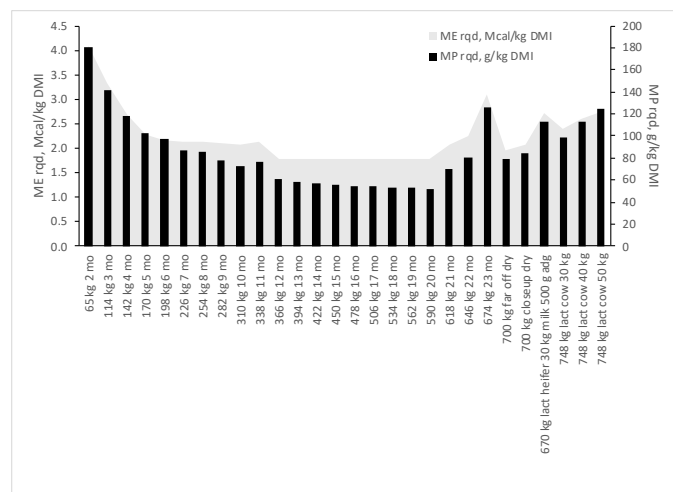


Figure 1. ME (Mcal/kg DMI) and MP (g/kg DMI) required by age for growing heifers (800 g/d) and selected dry and lactating cows

MATURE WEIGHT	BREEDING WEIGHT	90-DAY WEIGHT	AGE AT FIRST CALVING (MONTHS)		
POUNDS	POUNDS	POUNDS	22	24	26
1,200	660	180	1.58	1.32	1.13
1,400	770	210	1.84	1.54	1.32
1,600	880	240	2.11	1.75	1.50
1,800	990	270	2.37	1.97	1.69
2,000	1,100	300	2.63	2.19	1.88

Table 1. ADG (pounds/day) pre-breeding required to achieve 22, 24 or 26 months (AFC) for various mature weights

MATURE WEIGHT	BREEDING WEIGHT	CALVING WEIGHT	ADG	“ADG”
POUNDS	POUNDS	POUNDS	POUNDS PER DAY	LAST TRIMESTER
1,200	660	984	1.16	1.83
1,400	770	1,148	1.35	2.13
1,600	880	1,312	1.55	2.44
1,800	990	1,476	1.74	2.74
2,000	1,100	1,640	1.94	3.05

Table 2. ADG required of bred heifers for various mature weights

The pre-breeding phase, especially heifers less than 6 months old, is the most efficient phase for protein utilization. It is during this phase where a large proportion of muscle and skeletal growth occurs. Figure 2a, calculated from the 1996 Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle (NRC), illustrates body composition from birth through maturity. Where the protein and fat curves intersect is about puberty, showing that puberty is related to stage of maturity. Figure 2b illustrates efficiency of protein utilization for growth (INRA 1989). The combination of these figures reinforces how efficient and protein demanding younger animals are.

Body composition has genetic and nutritional components. The potential number of muscle cells is set at birth. Primary muscle cells are determined within two months of conception. Secondary muscle cells are set between the second and seventh month of gestation. Fat cells begin to develop with

the secondary muscle cells. Post-birth, visceral fat cells will continue to form for a couple weeks. Subcutaneous and intermuscular fat cell creation continues until about 150 days of age. Intramuscular fat cells will continue to form until about 250 days old. Thus, the number of cells is heavily influenced by dam management and nutrition via epigenetics (Costa et al. 2021). Nutritionally, we cannot alter muscle cell numbers, but their potential use can be limited via underfeeding energy and/or amino acids or environmental/health stress. Given the extended development of fat cells, it appears protein-deficient, high-energy diets may result in earlier and greater fat deposition. We observed this in Argentina with feedlot cattle.

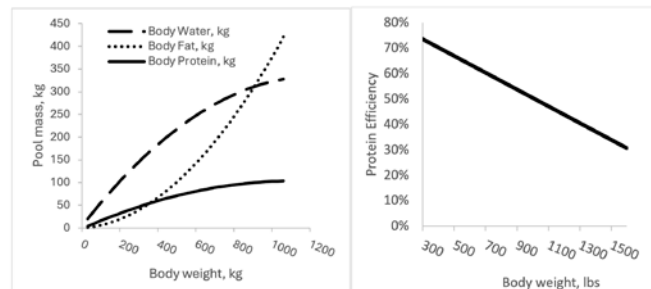


Figure 2. (a) Body composition curves generated from NRC (1996) and (b) Efficiency of protein utilization for gain (INRA, 1998)

The challenge with most heifers, primarily those post-puberty through second trimester of gestation, is the potential for them to get fat. Almost everyone thinks this is related to excessive energy intake, lack of exercise, lack of protein fed, or “you can’t feed silages to heifers.” There are two specific nutrients to consider, neither of which can be overcome by formulation or feeding additional protein.

First is the amount and type of starch. Starch that is fermented in the rumen is excellent (unless we overdo it and end up in acidosis). This produces microbial protein and primarily propionate, which is then converted to glucose post-absorption. Starch that escapes the rumen is a challenge, however. Here, it tends to be used primarily for adipose metabolism. Up to 40% of it never leaves the “gut” and we can see increases in body condition.

The second nutrient is one that is never discussed: lactic acid. Typically, we only think about lactic acid in clinically acidotic animals, but what about all the lactic acid an animal consumes from the diet? Silages contain 1.5 to >10% lactic acid. The level of lactic acid in silages depends on forage species, stage of maturity, moisture level and type of silage inoculant used. Some of this lactic acid will be used by specific rumen microbes. The rest will be absorbed. Smith and Crouse (1984) reported that 15-35% of the acetyl units (basically the building blocks) in intramuscular and subcutaneous fat in dairy cows comes from lactic acid. Whitehurst et al. (1981) reported that, in

cattle 11-19 months of age, subcutaneous, intramuscular and intermuscular fat synthesis from lactate increased until 17 months of age. Feedlot trials of Lomas (1979) suggested that increasing dietary lactic acid by approximately 2 percentage points (e.g., 4 to 6% dry matter) increases carcass fat by 2 units (e.g., 28 to 30%). Overall, it becomes clear that heifers fed higher-quality silages (typically high lactic acid) are prone to increased fat deposition. It is important to note that NRC (2001) and NASEM (2021) do not consider lactic acid in formulation or animal development/growth.

Options/Recommendations

The objective of any raiser (on a dairy or custom grower) is to produce a heifer of the correct size/BCS at the lowest cost per pound of gain. This begins before the calf is born with adequate dry cow nutrition and management. A great example of this is heat stress abatement where it has been shown that calves born to heat-stressed dry cows produce less milk in first and second lactations. Birth until 3 months of age are discussed routinely and many of us are now targeting a minimum of tripling birthweight by day 90.

Returning to Figure 1, the 3- to 6-month-old heifer offers immense opportunity to maximize frame and muscle growth. The simplest for dairies raising their own heifers is to feed these animals the high-cow total mixed ration (TMR). It matches their nutrient density requirements. Using current feed prices (New York State), this equates to approximately \$0.65 per

pound of gain (2.55 pounds ADG predicted). I followed this approach on a dairy for more than 20 years and we routinely averaged 2.64 pounds ADG from day 60 through 6 months. Additionally, as a drop from a cow pen, the cost for producing the TMR (labor, equipment, fuel) was diluted versus making a dedicated batch – a cost seldom considered. Where the high-cow TMR cannot be used, formulating a diet with similar nutritional qualities is necessary. Something difficult to place is a “feed cost/animal response” value. We have observed that heifers fed the high-cow diet tended to have lower incidence of respiratory disease and ringworm versus lower spec diets. Regardless, for us to reduce AFC, pre-pubertal growth must increase. This farm averaged 21-month AFC for more than 20 years; thus, heifers averaged nearly 2.0 pounds ADG from birth to calving.

A second option is formulating a diet for a heifer that is 9-12 months of age. From weaning until 6 months of age, a top-dress grain is fed at a flat 5 pounds per head. Table 3 contains an example top-dress that when fed at 5 pounds with 3.5 pounds dry matter (DM) corn silage and 3.0 pounds DM grass silage supports 2.60 pounds ADG at 3 months. The formula includes a bypass protein source. Achieving higher rates of gain may require these ingredients. Notice that there is zero urea. Typically, urea is not required in any of these diets as it does not supply true protein. Urea only provides nitrogen (as ammonia) to the rumen microbes. The ammonia will come from silages, rumen degradable protein (RDP) and nitrogen recycled by the animal.

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INGREDIENT	% MIX (AS FED)	NUTRIENT	VALUE
GROUND CORN	44.6	Crude protein	27.0 %DM
CANOLA	29.7	Starch	34.6 %DM
SOY PLUS	22.0	ME	1.1 Mcal/pound
MINERALS/ VITAMINS	3.7	RUP*	48.5 %CP

*RUP=rumen undegradable protein

Table 3. Example top-dress formula and selected nutrients for 3- to 6-month old heifers

Starting at 6 months, my heifer diets contain higher levels of forage neutral detergent fiber (NDF). The primary source is a lower-quality grass silage. I do this so we can feed ad libitum (forage NDF % body weight between 1.1 and 1.4) and maintain desired ADG and BCS. I prefer this to limit feeding as there is research suggesting negative social behavior in limit-fed heifers (Goeller et al. 2023).

There are additional benefits to reducing AFC. First, the number of heifers a dairy requires is reduced. For every 1,000 cows with a 35% cull rate, reducing AFC by 3 months (e.g., 24 to 21 months old) reduces heifer

inventory needs by 48 animals. This would reduce total feed requirements and manure production as well. Similarly, as a grower, this increases annual animal turnover by 12.5% with no additional infrastructure.

Conclusions

Heifers are expensive. Raising them faster reduces fixed costs per animal and can produce a superior animal. When evaluating options, consider cost per pound of gain. The increasing environmental pressure we are under also needs to be considered. Increasing ADG appropriately (i.e. not making short, fat heifers) will also reduce nitrogen excretion, phosphorus excretion and methane production per pound of ADG.

Re-evaluate the target weights you are using, given the genetic changes in dairy breeds. Feed to capture growth efficiency and to reach the target calving weight four to six weeks pre-calving. Properly formulated diets that are high fill can be a challenge but achievable. Also, start watching lactic acid levels in diets and target less than 4% DM to avoid fat deposition.

As a dairy producer or custom heifer grower, contracts and management decisions should be performance based, not purely cost per day. A dairyman once told a tour group, "Until that heifer starts milking, we are in the beef business. We need to grow them as fast as we can without getting them fat." That is sage advice.

References available upon request.

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